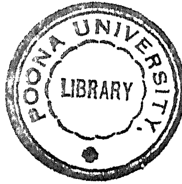
ETHICS OF THE GREAT RELIGIONS



BY

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ETHICS AND RELIGION.

AMONG those who take little or no trouble to analyse their beliefs there is still to be found a vague but widespread idea that morality is the offspring of religion, and that, if the established faith of a country is destroyed, a general dissolution of ethical obligations is certain to follow. A few considerations may be brought forward to show that this idea of the origin of morality is a mistaken one and the apprehension as to its future groundless. The common notion that the Bible is the source of our moral conceptions is not merely at variance with the facts, but is discredited by the Bible itself, which shows clearly that, long before the actual records were written, such conceptions were recognised and acted upon by the persons whose history is related. Indeed, a very early moral perception is implied by the legendary story of Eden, the significance of which lies in the fact that man had by disobedience to a divine command attained a knowledge of good and evil, which apparently it was intended he should never gain. In this incident the theological mind sees a "Fall," while the reasoning mind sees a rise—the first stage in the growth of a normal and necessary experience. The fallacious explanation hides a germ of truth; but it is a strange perversity that insists on such a palpable myth being accepted as veritable history.

Scientific investigation has now placed it beyond doubt that man has lived upon this earth for a time inconceivably longer than the 6,000 years deduced from the perplexing chronology of the Bible. The evidence need not be given here; it is available to all in the admirable summary contained in the late Mr. Samuel Laing's *Human Origins.* Let it suffice to say that the strength of the evidence lies in its cumulative character. From geology and astronomy we learn the enormous antiquity of the earth. Palæontology and archæology reveal to us the existence of primitive races who have passed away without leaving even a name behind. History, fragmentary though its records are, tells us of populous communities which inhabited the valley of the Nile and the plains of Mesopotamia from 7,000 to 10,000 years ago. Common sense delivers a similar verdict. If man had been created only 4,000 years B.C., it is utterly impossible that the great nations of Egypt and Assyria, to say nothing of the teeming populations of Central Asia, Hindustan, and China, could have developed into full social activity at

such early dates as history proves beyond question to have been the case.

Now, as it is certain that long before the date of the Flood, long before even the supposed Creation, large and comparatively civilised communities actually existed, it follows with equal certainty that in a still remoter antiquity those communities must have evolved laws more or less ethical in character for the regulation of their co-operative life. They could not otherwise have grown into nations. We know, from the evidence of the flint implements, that primitive men lived at first in small groups, which, for mutual protection, and following the ties of kinship, arranged themselves into clans; these in time became communities, and ultimately developed into great nations. This process occupied immense periods of time. In its earlier stages progress towards civilisation is slow to a degree almost inconceivable to us. Without the appliances, the inventions, and even the most familiar ideas of civilised life, existence drags on from day to day in one stagnant, uneventful round, the tedium of which, relieved only by the excitement of warfare and the chase, is unperceived by those who have never been accustomed to anything else. But coincident with the formation of the clan the need of laws governing the relations of the members to one another would make itself felt. In the case of a large community, whether pastoral or civic, a definite body of legislation would be too urgent a necessity to be disregarded. As internal dissension would seriously weaken the defensive capacity of the community as a body, disputes between its members would need to be adjusted by an impartial tribunal, and a system of justice would become organised. Murder, as diminishing the number and available strength of the social unit, would require stern suppression. Theft, slander, personal violence, would be felt as infractions of the right of each member to enjoy the advantages of association. From such offences each was liable to suffer, and all were therefore equally concerned to prevent them. If each member gave part of his time, strength, and intelligence to benefit the corporate body, it was natural to expect in return its aid in the protection of property, and some security for personal liberty. The advantages being common to all, each one would have the same interest in maintaining social order, and the popular concurrence would be assured in any legislative system, however rude, which had for its object the benefit of the whole community. The solicitude for the rights of property shown by many ancient codes, of which that of Hammurabi may be cited as an example, confirms a presumption which modern research has rendered imperative. And the social requirement would be stimulated by the growth of the natural disposition of human beings to unite their activities, as well as by the development of those sympathetic feelings which, as Darwin pointed out, form an essential part of the social instinct. In this way arose the idea of law, the idea of justice, the idea of moral

duty, as the primary needs of a community if it was to hold together at all.

With this conception religion would at first have nothing to do. Man's feebly-developed reasoning powers led him to attribute to the forces of nature, and even to inanimate objects, feelings and passions similar to those which he experienced himself. Motion meant life. Life meant personality. No such idea as that of a boundary between the natural and the supernatural existed or could exist. They were not two conceptions, but one conception; and in this confusion, this ignorance, this credulity, we must look for the origin of all religious ideas. A crude fetish worship led by degrees to the veneration of the spirits of ancestors, of the heads of families, of warriors, of chieftains, of kings, and so, after thousands of years of dim surmise and painful striving, to the notion of a supreme spirit who had created the universe and man. In this slow process the religious impulse was marked by ever-varying degrees of superstition. For ages religion meant simply sacrifice, propitiation, ceremonial. Spiritual ideas and ethical influences came long afterwards.

It may be difficult to say positively which idea, that of morality or that of religion, came first in order of time; but it seems tolerably clear that for ages the two conceptions developed independently. All ancient records appear to indicate the absence of any close relation between them. So marked is the severance that in many cases the more religious the people the more conspicuous was their lack of morals. The Bible itself is instructive on this subject. Among the Jewish patriarchs, even where their characters were superior, we do not perceive that a fervent piety was any great bar to lying, cheating, and murder. In David we find a pronounced example of this severance of morals from religion. In spite of a religious faith so exalted and sincere that he was called a man after God's own heart, his natural ferocity was so great that in extreme old age he enjoined with his dying breath a savage vengeance upon his enemies. The conception of God in the Old Testament is sadly marred by this dissociation of religion from pure ethical ideas. At one moment tender, merciful, and gracious, in the next breath he is described as delighting in bloodshed, inflicting terrific punishments upon his enemies, and actuated by many of the passions which civilised humanity has learnt to consider debasing and shameful. The prejudicial effect upon morals of such imperfect conceptions of deity can hardly be exaggerated. The worshipper is prone to imitate the God he reveres, and Plato long ago warned the world against the mischief of allowing children to be taught that what is wrong for men is right for God. It can hardly be said that the Bible has not fostered the error of an unworthy anthropomorphism. And the error has not been confined to an insignificant people, but, by means of a strange and incomprehensible theory of divine inspiration, has permeated the civilised world, with

results which are a standing testimony to the disastrous effects of religion divorced from morality. Religion has formulated itself in terms of theology. Theology inevitably tends to exclusiveness and bigotry, and, in the result, to persecution for matters of opinion.

It is, in fact, clear that only as religion is purified and uplifted by ethical impulses does it become a civilising force. To this process the aid of the reasoning faculties is essential. In reason must lie the perception that worship should be something more than a blind aspiration towards the unseen; that it should be a power promoting social well-being as well as individual happiness. Reason must by long experience discover what beliefs are best fitted to attain this end, and what best accord with man's ever-growing perception of the right and the true. It took many ages before these two divisions of life could be made to work in harmony. Nor is the process yet complete, for theological and ethical reconstructions are still in progress. We cannot doubt, however, that the priestly caste—sometimes with the purest, sometimes with the most interested, motives—must thousands of years ago have perceived that religion could be made a powerful aid to morals, and numberless efforts in the direction of amalgamating them were made. So considerable a success was achieved that even in our own time large numbers of people still believe the two spheres to be practically identical, and that, if the one suffers under the rude breath of criticism, the other must suffer with it. Many thinkers, however, now hold that such a fear is baseless, and that even if it were well-founded it would afford no reason why we should be silent concerning that which we see to be false. They find that organised religion has been in the past productive of a degree of evil which its supporters are either unaware of or loth to admit. Rationalists are suspicious of such religion. They cannot admit that age has entirely changed its nature. It is not that they object to personal piety and humble trust in a higher power. But they find that religion unenlightened by reason invariably merges in superstition, and often leads to the commission of acts of barbarous cruelty in the supposed interests of its deity; that the intellectual forms in which its beliefs are stated have a tendency to narrow the understanding, to freeze the warmth of sympathy, and, being assumed to be final, to impede progress to larger and truer conceptions. If the independent thinker is right in this contention—and history gives the amplest testimony to its truth—he is justified in maintaining that all religious beliefs must be held subject to the verification of reason, and that the link between religion and morals, not being essential or indissoluble, may be broken if adequate ground can be shown. Religion and morals came into existence independently; they have to a large extent developed independently; and their union therefore cannot be deemed of eternal duration. What man has joined man can put asunder. The one assumes that morality originates in the will of God; the other finds

that it springs from the experience of man. "Theology supposes that all conduct in accordance with the desire and command of a man-like God, *whatever may be its natural effect*, is good; and that all conduct not in such accordance, *whatever may be its natural effect*, is bad" (Wilson's *New Light on Old Problems*, p. 55). Which is the truer basis of conduct, conformity to an unknown and contradictory will or the recognition of known effects upon human life? It is an error to teach that morality springs from any revelation. "It is of the very essence of the moral sense that it is a common perception by men of what is good for man......When men respect human life for the sake of Man, tranquillity, order, and progress go hand in hand; but those who only respected human life because God had forbidden murder have set their mark upon Europe in fifteen centuries of blood and fire" (Professor Clifford, *Ethics and Religion*). It is this inveterate spirit of theology which has confused positive moral duties with erroneous dogmas and ceremonial precepts, to the serious detriment of both moral and intellectual progress.

Religion and morals occupy different departments of life. The objections which apply to the one do not apply to the other. The philosophical batteries which are shattering dogmas and creeds into fragments have no force against those moral concepts which a long course of experience has proved to be not merely beneficial, but indispensable to human welfare. The foundations of religion on its intellectual side are speculative, changing, unverifiable; those of morality are established, practical, and permanent. Is there any reason to suppose that, if Christendom finally gives up the doctrine of the Atonement, men will cease to be honest or women virtuous? The vague talk about the dissolution of dogma involving the break-up of morals assumes that they cannot exist apart. Has Buddhism been so great a failure? Even if the world at large were to throw off moral restraints to-morrow, has not the Christian Church faith enough in its ethical principles to continue to believe and preach them? And would not their practical effect be as great, or even greater, without the burden of doubtful doctrine? As for the masses, what value has religious restraint ever had for them? Why should it be supposed that the normal interests of humanity are not sufficient to keep men and women at least as united in the practice of justice and truth in the future as they have ever been under the rule of the Church? Is it the authority of religion or a perception of the ultimate utility of the natural virtues that constrains them so to act at present? Do we not feel impelled to do our duty, find a pleasure in acts of kindness, feel the impulse to honesty and truthfulness, though we no longer believe in hell-fire? It is wide of the mark to assume that religion is the only safeguard of morality. Look at the safeguards which will remain even if the whole dogmatic framework of religion were to collapse as suddenly as

the Philistines' temple in the grasp of Samson. We have the law of the land as a terror to evil-doers. We have the interest of the community, which knows well enough that honesty is the best policy, a statement equivalent, at its lowest, to saying that rational grounds exist for moral action. We have the simple faith in virtue which still animates the majority, and leads them to practise it without hope of reward. We have the Church organisations themselves, which will presumably continue to do their duty. Lastly, we have the large numbers of persons outside the Churches, who, under the name of Ethical Societies and similar bodies, are striving earnestly and patiently for individual and social improvement. We may conclude, therefore, that as the intellectual reconstruction which theology is to-day undergoing is likely to be for long a continuous process, and as the vital connection of particular doctrines with daily life has never been proved, the apprehension of injury to conduct from the disintegration of dogma is devoid of reasonable foundation. All intellectual statements of religious truth are temporary. What is permanent is not its form, but its spirit. When this spirit allies itself with the moral ideal, both are purified and strengthened. In propounding an absurd theology religion has done ill, but in the union of pious aspiration with practical ethics she has builded more wisely than she knew. The ethical element which theology has assimilated is really that which gives to religion its immense hold on the human heart. Dogmas decay and pass into oblivion like mists before the rising sun; but the sense of righteousness remains to appeal for ever to the sympathies of struggling men and women. In their doctrinal aspects religions differ widely; in their practical claims they unite in requiring obedience to the elementary principles of right. These principles exist independently of any religion, while making themselves felt in all. It is the object of the present little work to exhibit in their practical aspect the leading ethical features of the most famous religions which have influenced, and continue to influence, mankind, and to show how closely they approach one another in that which is most essential to human welfare.

ETHICS OF THE GREAT RELIGIONS

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

I.—Judaism.

THE collection of books known as the Bible embraces two distinct systems of religion, each having a theistic basis: the earlier, Judaism, of a ceremonial character, regulating conduct rather than influencing motive; the other, Christianity, broader in its claims, simpler in its ritual, and guiding conduct less by formal observances than by the power of impulses from within.

Our purpose in this chapter will be to present a very brief outline of the leading ethical characteristics of both religions, not so much from the critical as from the sympathetic point of view, desiring rather to dwell on those conceptions which have a permanent truth and beauty than to criticise those which are transient and imperfect. Into the vexed questions of the date and authorship of the various books constituting the Bible we shall not enter, beyond observing that we regard as sufficiently established those conclusions of modern scholarship which imply that the early purity and vigour of the Hebrew faith could not have been contemporaneous with the institution of the Levitical laws, which most probably originated after the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. It is improbable that the prophets should have been so strangely silent about the numerous obligations of the Mosaic ritual if they were aware of its existence as a divinely-revealed code. Their occasional scornful references to the system of sacrifice doubtless imply that such a system was then either in existence or in course of development, but only as a form of religion with which they could not reconcile their own higher conceptions.

Those who regard the Bible as a revelation from God to man imply that a true morality cannot exist apart from the Bible, and did not originate prior to the assumed revelation which enabled Moses to write the Pentateuch. As a matter of fact, our knowledge of the history of ancient Egypt and Assyria proves beyond doubt that, in the main, all existing moral ideas were in force and operation long before a line of the Bible was written. Slight reflection is necessary to show that men could not have dwelt on this earth, as they certainly have done, for many thousands of years before the dawn of history without developing a workable code of morals; and when we consider that great organised communities, well on the way to civilisation, existed long before the assumed creation of man as recorded in the Bible, the conviction is strengthened that all the essential elements of morality must, by the sheer force of social requirements, have been developed ere Sargon, like the later Moses, was rescued from the river, or Menes trod the banks of the Nile. A glance at the Bible confirms this. We find moral excellence attributed to the earlier patriarchs, Enoch, Noah, and Melchisedek, though we can attach no very clear meaning to the phrase, "walked with God"; and the possibility that these personages belong rather to myth than to history must be recognised. Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph

were actuated by as high a sense of right as were those of their descendants who were supposed to have had the advantage of a written revelation to guide them. It is true that the patriarchs, Abraham in particular, are stated to have had direct relations with Deity; but it is significant that the "covenants" referred to were not of an ethical character. There is not a word to imply that moral ideas were then first made known, not a word to explain the nature of moral obligation, or setting forth any original or superior conceptions. The prior existence of such ideas is throughout assumed. Though he was commended for practising "justice and judgment," Abraham's righteousness appears to have consisted mainly in implicit obedience to orders, an obedience the less remarkable if the communications were at the time clearly recognised as divine. The blessings referred to carried with them in every instance the promise of superabundant reward in material prosperity. One might have supposed that the object of these communications would have been the awakening and strengthening of the spirit of righteousness and imparting valuable knowledge of social duties. But we constantly find the promise to be that the descendants of Abraham are to become a great nation, "as the sand on the seashore for multitude." Nor should we omit to notice that, while Abraham is commended for keeping the "statutes and laws" of God, there is no record of ethical laws or statutes having been announced.

It seems necessary to draw a distinction between the morality which is expressly inculcated in the Old Testament and the morality which it incidentally recognises. To the former belong the Ten Commandments, the Levitical and other laws, and the teachings of the Psalms and Prophets. To the latter belongs the conduct ascribed to God and the personages of the Old Testament, comprising, it must be confessed, many actions of an immoral or doubtful character, recorded for the most part without the slightest word of condemnation or disapproval. We propose now to give a rapid glance at the moral principles which may be considered as definitely enjoined or sanctioned by the Hebrew Scriptures.

On the whole, the Ten Commandments may be considered as a valuable *résumé* of the moral law, and to be of the character which we should expect to be reached by a people in the stage of development which the Hebrews had attained in the time of Moses. Whether Moses really existed, whether the Commandments were divinely given through him, whether they originated in the fifteenth century B.C. or a thousand years later, are questions which cannot here be discussed. The code is not a perfect summary of moral obligation, nor are its negative injunctions calculated to foster the highest type of character. But in its mingling of a stern and lofty Theism with the requirements necessary to social well-being it must have been a great advance on any previously existing code. Its only positive commands are two: the observance of the Sabbath, and respect for parents; the former a familiar custom of the ancient Oriental nations, the latter an elementary obligation, some knowledge of which is common to almost all intelligent races. The prohibition of idolatry, and of the worship of more than the one deity, on the ground that "the Lord is a jealous God," are commands which are more easily attributed to a religious man jealous for the honour of his deity than to the deity himself; while the remaining provisions embody those dictates of primary ethics which the requirements of all social life render obviously necessary. The concluding injunction, directed against the covetous spirit which is the source of dishonesty, though but an amplification of the eighth commandment, indicates a higher tone, as dealing with motives rather than with actions.

Any detailed analysis of the enactments contained in the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd

chapters of Exodus is, of course, impossible in a brief sketch, but a few of their special features may be mentioned. It is not to be expected that an even and rational standard of justice as conceived by ourselves should be found in the code of any semi-barbaric tribe; but, when such a code is assumed to be of divine origin, we have every right to expect a greater moral purity and uniformity than these chapters reveal. In many respects the laws are self-contradictory, and, if we are at times surprised at their humane spirit, we are as often shocked by their barbarous severity. The laws regulating slavery allow the servant to depart at the end of six years a free man. But if from a sentiment of personal affection a slave was willing to remain with his master, the latter was ordered to pierce the slave's ear in the presence of the "Elohim," or judges, in token that the servitude should last for ever. A surer means of discouraging affectionate service and the natural aspiration for liberty could hardly have been hit upon. If the slave married during his service, he was not allowed to take his wife and children with him if he chose freedom—an excellent expedient for perpetuating slavery. The fact was that no idea whatever of moral imperfection attached to the institution of slavery, as such. Ages of experience were needed for the growth of such a conception.

The penalty of death for cursing or reviling a parent is excessive, particularly as nothing is said as to the character of the cursing or of a possible provocation for it. It is natural that the distinction between murder and manslaughter should be imperfectly perceived by communities in a low stage of development; but some surprise is equally natural that, in laws alleged to emanate from an all-knowing God, the distinction is not more clearly stated. If one man strikes another (whether by accident or design is not mentioned in the twelfth verse of chapter xxi.) with a fatal result, the slayer is to be put to death. But, on the other hand, if God delivers the victim into his hand, the slayer may flee to an appointed place for refuge. The difficulty of proving the circumstances under which the one man is delivered into the hands of the other is not apparently foreseen. Again, in the event of a woman suffering a miscarriage caused by men quarrelling, if no mischief follow (is miscarriage no mischief?), the punishment is to be as the woman's husband determines. But if mischief follow, death is to be the punishment of the offender—whether of one or both of the combatants is not made clear. None but a very crude notion of justice would make one of the disputants the judge of the other's criminality.

A strangely cruel law enacts that, if a slave, male or female, is beaten to death by the master, the latter is to be punished—in what way is not stated. But if the poor wretch linger in agony for a day or two, the master is not to be punished, because the slave is his money. The general principle of the Jewish law was that of an elementary justice—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life; but this principle was not consistently carried into practice. If a man stole an ox or sheep and sold it, he had to restore five-fold; but if he had not time to dispose of it, he had only to restore double. It is not easy to see where the difference in the moral character of the offence lies. The prohibition of injury to the widow or fatherless is wise and commendable; but the penalty of death for disobedience is unduly severe. The threat of utter destruction to anyone who sacrifices to alien gods indicates a frame of mind which identifies righteousness rather with ceremonial observances than with practical morals. It is for this offence that the utmost ferocity of punishment is reserved—even the slaughter of the innocent beasts of the offenders being ordained—an extreme, however, which must have had its good effects in clearing the way for higher conceptions of religion. A jealousy so merciless as to expressly forbid a parent to feel pity for the son whom he is ordered to slay must be

deemed rather a reversion to barbarism than a truly ethical sentiment. The command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," has been productive of an appalling amount of misery and physical suffering, and has done infinite mischief by its support of an unworthy superstition. On the other hand, the injunctions to take care of an enemy's property, not to exact usury from the poor or to oppress the stranger, and similar enactments, have a marked tendency to promote the social welfare, though such legislation is, of course, not peculiar to the Hebrew system. Other customs of the Hebrews, such as the trial for jealousy, the casting of lots, etc., are so closely analogous to the sorceries of savage "medicine men" that they cannot be pronounced consistent with any enlightened conception of morality, and cannot therefore be safely attributed to a divine source. It is little wonder that the custom of ordeals survived so late in mediæval times when they were sanctioned by what was regarded as the infallible word of God. So numerous are the instances in the Old Testament in which divine vengeance or great calamities were averted by prompt sacrifice of the supposed offenders that the least careful reader must perceive the immense influence of superstition among the Hebrews, and must experience a doubt, apart from all critical research, whether the descendants of Abraham were in any sense under the peculiar protection and superintending care of the Almighty, though the strength of their conviction on the subject cannot be questioned.

Most of the Levitical law consists of ceremonial observances, which have but an indirect moral significance. The very extensive slaughter of animals required by the Jewish sacrificial system could only be practised by a race in a low stage of civilisation. With truer spiritual discernment, the prophets declared that the blood of bulls and goats could by no possibility remove sin. The system was, in fact, a convenient form of easing man's conscience and relaxing his moral responsibility: sins readily atoned for are readily committed. As having sprung, however, from still more barbarous conceptions, the Jewish sacrifices mark a forward rather than a backward movement. The requirement, for instance, that the first-born son should be devoted to the Lord is evidently a survival from the primitive practice of offering the life of the dearest earthly possession to appease the vengeful gods, and the great advance in humanity demands recognition. The various laws in Leviticus xviii., xix., and xx., with the exception of occasional monstrous excesses of severity, are wise and beneficial, and imply a distinct striving after moral purity. In Deuteronomy we find obligation frequently lifted to a higher level. Amid the reek of the slaughter-house, the smoke of the burnt-offerings, and the "hot anger of the Lord," we find the elements of a purer faith. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. x. 12); and the injunction, "Love ye therefore the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (verse 19), lifts the mind above those narrow prejudices of the clan which in ancient times were so powerful and so common. In Exodus xxxiv. 6 we meet with a conception of God which it is difficult to reconcile with other representations of the divine nature, or with many of the actions attributed to him: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Such passages are scattered about the earlier books of the Bible, but their logical bearing does not seem to have been perceived. That this merciful and long-suffering God should purposely visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation, was not considered an anomaly, owing to that severance between

religious observance and moral conduct which it is one of the main objects of true religion to abolish. That the Hebrews strove to the best of their power to make their religion influence their daily life seems undoubted. Their ideal tended distinctly towards practical righteousness, but they had not the experience which would always enable them to know what righteousness involved.

The terrible cruelties in war, the excessive penalty for filial disobedience, the primitive methods for the investigation of crime and for the trial of chastity which we find sanctioned in the book of Deuteronomy, are relieved by such admirably inconsistent provisions as these :—

"Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers, that are in thy land within thy gates" (xxiv. 14).

"The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (v. 19).

Elementary as this conception of justice may seem to us, it was doubtless needed among the ancient Jews. But it seems a pity that the family of the unfortunate Achan did not get the benefit of it. Hebrew righteousness was, in fact, dominated throughout and frequently fettered by the conception of a limited, partial, and jealous Deity from whom it was supposed to have originated.

It is not until we come to the Psalms and Prophets that we meet with a really internal heart-felt ethical sentiment, as distinct from the external regulation of conduct by law; though, as already implied, the germs of such a sentiment are met with in much earlier periods. It may be fairly presumed that some of the Psalms are of older date than the Levitical law and the book of Deuteronomy, while considerably later than the ancient traditions embodied in Genesis and Exodus. Before such a degree of religious exaltation was attainable there must have been a long period of religious faith, often very imperfect, but with a tendency to enlightenment combined with fervour. On the other hand, after the outburst of spiritual feeling which we find in the Psalms and Prophets, a reaction was inevitable; the highest level could not be maintained; men of smaller minds and colder hearts would carry on the work of the priesthood, and forms and ceremonies would come to take the place of free and unfettered emotion. The religious life of communities ebbs and flows like the tides of the ocean.

The Psalms are poetic, not practical; devotion and not duty is their theme. The 15th Psalm is one of the first to trench upon the actual :—

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

"He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

"He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

"He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent."

Psalm xxxvii. enjoins control of the temper: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." We find, however, as in so many other passages of the Bible, the suggestion of temporal rewards for virtuous conduct: "The meek shall inherit the earth" (v. 11); "Depart from evil and do good, and dwell for evermore" (v. 27).

Among the finest expressions of a religious emotion which springs from the heart and seeks to purify conduct at its source are the oft-quoted verses of Psalm li.: "Create in me a clean heart, O God;

and renew a right spirit within me." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

"If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. lxii. 10) is a wise caution of special applicability to times like our own.

The description of God in the 86th Psalm as "full of compassion, gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth," while affording little indication of what these terms implied to the writer, indicates a moral altitude which is sadly tarnished by the bitter imprecations upon his enemies which disfigure Psalm cix. In the same way the beautiful lament, "By the waters of Babylon there we sat down," is utterly spoiled by the tigerish hate of the last verse. Indeed, throughout these wonderful songs we so often find the most earnest aspirations for righteousness, the highest intensity of religious devotion, side by side with the most furious imprecations, as to awaken a doubt whether righteousness meant quite the same thing to the Hebrew as it does to us. In the main it must have been a tribal, not a universal, obligation.

As an expression of religious feeling, the language of the Psalms has perhaps never been surpassed. It is a striking fact that they are still in use all over the world by members of a different faith, who find in the Hebrew Psalms the simplest, the most fervent, and the most beautiful expression of the promptings of religious sentiment. While the aspirations after righteousness are intensely earnest and sincere, the current conception of the nature of that righteousness was not always correspondingly high. That such a conception must have been determined by the moral progress and the social conditions of the time can only be a difficulty in the eyes of those who do not remember how slowly the perception of the practical obligations of righteousness has grown in breadth and consistency. The Psalms, like the rest of the Old Testament books, are too often disfigured by a ferocity towards the writers' enemies, which was the natural accompaniment to vivid but limited conceptions of the divine nature.

In the Book of Proverbs the seeker after moral truth would expect to find much that is valuable; and, in spite of a great number of the aphorisms being of a local or archaic sort, appealing but slightly to modern sympathies, there is a mass of counsel which is worthy of greater attention than it commonly receives. The precept, "If thine enemy be hungry give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty give him water to drink," embodies the highest moral tone of the book, and is of special value as showing how some of the sentiments supposed to be peculiar to Christianity existed in the older dispensation.

One noteworthy feature characterises this collection. A great and laudable emphasis is laid on the intellectual side of human nature. The writer is never tired of enjoining the acquisition of knowledge, instruction, discretion, understanding. He is the eloquent advocate of wisdom. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding......She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The pious mind would perceive a strong discouragement of evil in the enumeration of things which are "an abomination unto the Lord"—"a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." The feeling of tenderness to animals is found in the verse, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," though it is not easy to reconcile with this the Jewish system of animal sacrifice. An enlargement of the individual aim is perceptible in the

sentence, "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." The following well-known texts imply an ethical consciousness of a high order: "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." The frequent assumption that wisdom, virtue, and prosperity are the gifts of God rather than essential fruits of personal effort and development is not altogether in harmony with modern ideas, but was, of course, a form of piety thoroughly natural to the zealous monotheism of the later Hebrews, and can hardly be said to detract from its ethical value. It is a somewhat curious fact that in Christian usage the Book of Proverbs, so rich in practical ethics, has been one of the most neglected of all the books of the Bible.

In the strangely sceptical Book of Ecclesiastes we find an injunction which may be endorsed by the most pronounced Agnostic: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Amid the magnificent imagery of the prophets, various passages occur in which the natural virtues are inculcated, and formal religious observances lightly esteemed. But in proportion to the bulk of these writings such passages are comparatively few. The intense spiritual energy of the prophets took the form of denunciation of sin rather than exhortations to practical righteousness. As it is impossible to quote more than specimen passages, we adduce a few which appear to be of special moral value.

The very emphatic words in which Isaiah condemns formal religion are quite inconsistent with any belief in the divine origin of the Levitical system. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isaiah i. 11–17).

A better definition of religion it would not be easy to find. A glimpse of Deity as judging man from the standpoint of the divine perfection, rather than from that of human desert, is afforded by the words: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah xliii. 25). "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him: and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah lviii. 6, 7)—again showing that the truest religion consists not in ritual, but in acts of beneficence. Even more strongly are sacrifices condemned in chapter lxvi. 3: "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered

swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol."

In chapter xviii. of the book of Ezekiel we meet with strong opposition to the idea that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. The prophet takes great pains to show that, if a man do that which is right, he shall live, though his father may have been wicked; while the wicked son of a good father shall die—in other words, that each shall reap the consequences of his own actions. This conception of justice, though by the prophet imperfectly applied to an Almighty God dealing with the creatures of his own handiwork, is still an advance upon that strange notion of moral responsibility current in most ancient nations, which punished a whole family for the sin of one of its members.

In reading large portions at a time of these prophetical writings, we become conscious that the continued storm of denunciation of idolatry does not represent the divine Being in the highest moral light; the tone is very human, and the proneness of the people to idolatry is unaccountable if they really possessed a divinely-ordained system by which to guide their lives. In Hosea vi. 6 moral excellence, not punctilious ritual, is again demanded: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." In chapter viii. 13 the idea is repeated: "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifice of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins." Chapter x. 12 exhorts to "sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy." The same tone of disgust at the sacrificial system is observable in Amos v. 21: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.......But let judgment run down as waters; and righteousness as a mighty stream." And in a celebrated passage the prophet Micah beautifully expressed an idea which seems to have taken strong hold upon the religious reformers of that far-off day: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 7, 8).

The latter part of this passage bears a striking resemblance in phraseology to that in Deuteronomy x. 12. In the end of his book Micah has aptly described the tenderness which, though frequently lost sight of, was an essential part of Israel's conception of God. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." The conception of righteousness, as a practical duty springing from pure motives, is enforced by Zechariah: "Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against your brother in your heart" (Zechariah vii. 9). And the fatherhood of God is announced by Malachi: "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" (Malachi ii. 10). The law of Moses is probably intended by this reference to a covenant. It was, no doubt, familiar to the Jewish people of the time of Malachi, though, with the exception of a passage at the conclusion of his short book, there is no direct reference to the Mosaic law in any of the prophets.

II.—Christianity.

The moral characteristics of the Christian system are not embodied in a fixed

code, like the Decalogue and the Levitical laws, but are scattered about in the numerous discourses, narratives, and letters contained in the New Testament. The most definite body of precepts is that attributed to Christ, in the early chapters of the first Gospel; and these precepts, though not uttered at one time, and in the order given, may be taken as fairly representative of his teaching. The passages known as the "beatitudes" breathe a spirit of resignation likely to comfort those afflicted by injustice or misfortune, though the moral beauty of the verses is certainly marred by the suggestion of a more than compensating reward. A great many of the passages in the "Sermon on the Mount" are unfeignedly to be commended, and one's only regret is that people in general, even those who believe these sayings to be divine, do not act up to them. The following passages embody a pure moral sentiment, and sometimes spiritual insight of a high and original order :—

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 23, 24). "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (*ibid*, verse 44). "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (*ibid*, vi. 6). "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (*ibid*, vii. 11, 12). "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick......I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (*ibid*, ix. 12, 13). "Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man" (*ibid*, xv. 11). "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, 'I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven'" (*ibid*, xviii. 21, 22). "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (*ibid*, xix. 14). "Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15).

Many of the sayings of Jesus have the striking merit of appealing straight to the heart, of aiming at the purifying of the motives rather than the regulation of external actions. It is not unwashed hands or anything which enters the mouth that defiles a man; the evil thoughts which give rise to immoral conduct are the real defilement. The tendency of his preaching was to attack sin at its source in the heart and conscience. The same thought is repeatedly found in the Old Testament, but Jesus gave it a powerful emphasis. Righteousness was to him a vital principle essentially different in character from ceremonial observance. Hypocrisy and formalism were visited with the severest condemnation, but for the repentant sinner he always had a word of tenderness and encouragement. Unlike so many of his more devoted followers, he appears to have shown towards sexual irregularity a certain degree of lenity. The rebuke of lust in Matt. v. 28 conveys no strong condemnation; while, in the mythical anecdote of the woman taken in adultery, the readiness with which he overlooks an apparently unrepented sin is a little surprising. Forgiveness of offences is strongly enjoined on the express ground that the implacable person has no right to expect the divine pardon for his own sins. While the analogy between human and divine forgiveness is imperfect, the effort to replace a lower conception by a higher

must always tend to self-control and the supremacy of the nobler feelings. In the simple and comprehensive "Lord's Prayer" we find one of the least offensive forms of petition. Love is held to be practically the fulfilment of the Jewish law—love to God, love to one's neighbour, even love to enemies, are placed on almost the same level of moral obligation; and, while the last may be an injunction impossible fully to obey, the effort to reach it is the surest antidote to the spirit of revenge, and one of the safeguards of social stability. In the nineteenth chapter of Matthew we have a striking anecdote. A rich young man asks Jesus the plain question what he shall do to obtain eternal life. A gentle rebuke by Jesus for calling him good is followed by the perfectly definite answer that obedience to the commandments will suffice. It is true that the questioner is advised to dispose of his wealth among the poor; but his reluctance to do this is not stated to be an absolute bar to entrance into the kingdom. It is a counsel of perfection which does not abrogate the earlier answer that in an upright life lies the way to the desired salvation. The parable of the publican and the Pharisee embodies a recommendation to religious sincerity of undoubted value, while in the beautiful story of the Good Samaritan we have a broad-minded and unconventional view of duty—a reproof of formalism and an insistence on kindly deeds—which has been too much neglected by the professed followers of the teacher. The wise and strikingly-expressed aphorism, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," has been similarly disregarded. Putting aside theological prepossessions, and reading the Gospel records with an open mind, we perceive that by far the greatest stress of the teaching of Jesus is laid on acts of benevolence—on those social duties which were once scorned as mere "good works." Faith is no doubt magnified, and its influence exaggerated, particularly in the unqualified promise that whatever is asked in prayer shall be received; but the fact that the greater portion of his public teaching dealt with practical duties, and not with any form of dogma, must always render secure the position of Jesus as a moral teacher of unique excellence. It is this quality which is the secret of his abiding influence, though, in spite of it, traditional ideas have attributed to him doctrines of a widely different character. If read literally, many of his maxims are extravagant and impossible; but to these a reasonable and not a slavish obedience needs to be rendered. That he performed a vast service to humanity by infusing into its consciousness a fresh, vivid, sincere, and ethical sentiment of religion cannot be doubted. It is the unwise narrowness of his followers that has so largely nullified its influence. On the whole, we may say with confidence that Jesus preached the virtues of sincerity, purity, simplicity, self-denial, and, above all, deeds of practical goodness.

Perhaps the most beautiful moral teaching of the whole Bible is that recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, where we find a conception of God widely removed from that which underlies most theological dogmas. God is not angry with the sinner, but ready and anxious to forgive him—so much so that he will forget, as it were, his power and his majesty, and will seek after the erring one, as a shepherd for a lost sheep, until he finds and brings him home. The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates this view in a homely and touching story, which must strike the unbiassed reader as being far truer, far more to be relied on as the very essence of religion, than those conceptions which bring into sharp relief the sterner aspects of the divine nature.

The words of Christ upon the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34), breathe a sublime spirit of love for ignorant and sinful men.

Beyond an emphatic renewal of the command to love one another, we find in the fourth Gospel comparatively little

of practical moral value. There is, of course, much spiritual beauty in the discourses attributed to Jesus, but the general representation of his personality is so different from that of the other Gospel writers, the discrepancies between this narrative and theirs are so numerous, and a fixed theological purpose is so obviously manifested, that the difficulty of relying on the writer's accuracy becomes a very serious one.

A further difficulty in relation to Christian ethics is caused by the doubt as to the degree in which Jesus intended the Jewish legal system to be binding upon his followers. While he freely revised many of its details, and placed the general sentiment of obedience in a fresh and broader light, he does not appear to have abrogated the Mosaic law as a whole. On the contrary, he is said to have repeatedly declared that not one jot of it should pass away. It was a true instinct which led his followers to disregard, by slow degrees, the cumbrous ritual of a system calculated to destroy spirituality, rather than to keep it vitally active; but such a result does not seem to have been contemplated by Jesus himself.[1] Paul, the great apostle of the new faith, was the chief agent in breaking the link which bound Christianity to Judaism, and it is in his writings that we find the most complete and systematic exposition of Christian ethics. In the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of his Epistle to the Romans an ample statement of duties is set out, of which limited space prevents our giving more than a brief summary. Love is to be sincere, unselfish, making itself known in kind actions. Patience, fervour, joy, prayer, sympathy, humility, are to be characteristics of the disciple; evil is to be hated; the way to overcome it is to recompense it with good. Vengeance is forbidden, anger discouraged. The ruling civil power is to be obeyed, on the ground that it is the minister of God's will, and its recognition by payment of tribute is lawful. The surest way to obey the commandments is to fulfil them from the spirit of love to others. A remarkable breadth and toleration with regard to the observance of the Sabbath and fast days and the use of foods and drinks is characteristic of Paul; and we are almost startled by the liberality of 1 Corinthians vii. 14, where he expressly states that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother." The Apostle's teaching on the subject of marriage, and his evident belief in the superiority of celibacy, will, of course, appeal differently to different minds. If it is, or ever was, a rule that the unmarried person is "careful for the things of the Lord," while the married person strives to please a partner, it is a rule which admits of so many exceptions that it is of little worth. In an age which continued to attach an excessive value to rites and ceremonies, Paul's teaching that "all things are lawful, but all things are not expedient," was a notable advance in the direction of broad common sense. The fine panegyric of love in the thirteenth chapter of the same Epistle is too well-known to need quotation. It is one of those "purple patches," the words of which are more familiar to us than the spirit animating them. Paul's strong vein of good sense again appears in the declaration, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" unintelligible to his hearers (1 Corinthians xiv. 19).

In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians we find one of Paul's favourite contrasts between the works of the flesh and the spirit, every form of wickedness being the outcome of the former, every variety of moral beauty the product of the latter. Against such a one-sided and arbitrary distinction it is a duty to protest. The idea that human beings are by nature hopelessly depraved, incapable of right conduct,

[1] For remarks on the character of Jesus see note at the end of this section.

except under divine influence, is both false and mischievous. That the higher impulses should rule the lower is evident. What is more, it is natural; but the idea that both lie within the normal capacity of human development is far from being a predominant idea with Paul, though it would be unjust to say that he never caught a glimpse of it. In the next chapter we find the higher suggestion, "Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Tenderness to the erring is inculcated in Galatians vi. 1: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted." And in the same chapter is taught the inevitable sequence of cause and effect in human conduct: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains a large number of recommendations to practical goodness; but, while recognising their deeply religious spirit, it cannot be said that all the Apostle's arguments on the relations of husbands and wives are entirely consistent with enlightened reason.

In Philippians i. 9 Paul prays that the love of his converts "may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," and presently adjures them, in lowliness of minds, to esteem others better than themselves, and again advises them to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling" (though the expression, "for it is God which worketh in you," has been fruitful in perplexity), and to "do all things without murmurings and disputings." One may fairly allude to the remarkable fact that it is precisely where Christian ethics are most conspicuously wise and liberal in spirit that they have been most flagrantly ignored by the majority of Christian Churches in after times—a vivid testimony to the strength of a narrow and traditional formalism. Can we say that these passages have even yet fulfilled their purpose?

In Philippians iv. 8 Paul recommends that whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report should be thought on and practised—that is, in effect, he enjoins obedience to conscience, leaving to each man the duty of defining and applying the terms. The liberty involved in the caution, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a fast day, or a Sabbath day," never seems to have been fully grasped by the Christian world in general, and even at the present day is but too often forgotten. "Put on, therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another" (Colossians iii. 12), lays the stress on the milder aspect of the Christian virtues; while 1 Thessalonians iv. 11, 12, gives the common-sense advice to mind one's own business and to earn one's own living.

In the following chapter the writer exhorts his brethren to be at peace among themselves, to "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men......Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil." Apart from the vagueness attaching to the word "good," this counsel combines, in a high degree, practical utility with moral excellence. That children should "show piety towards their own family and requite their parents" (1 Timothy v. 4), and "if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy v. 8), are passages which show that Paul's practical mind disregarded (or knew nothing of) the injunction attributed to Jesus to hate one's own father and mother. The same Epistle inculcates a spirit of contentment which, though conducive to personal happiness, does little for social progress.

We are further told that "the love of money is the root of all evil"—a caution against greed of which we perceive the value, while we reject the literal accuracy of the statement. As against the desire for wealth, Paul prefers to dwell on the higher obligations to "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

The Epistle to Titus contains a good deal of counsel similar in tone to that which has been already quoted in recommendation of righteousness, meekness, and good works. The striking and suggestive saying, "Unto the pure all things are pure," long ago passed into proverbial philosophy.

In Hebrews x. 4 we meet with an emphatic declaration that "it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins," though the writer does not explain how the blood of Christ can do so. In each case the principle is the Pagan conception of sacrifice to an angry God, and the greater value of the sacrifice adds nothing to its efficiency in removing the guilt of others.

In James i. 27 we find the most practical definition of religion in the New Testament: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." It can hardly be said that this definition comprehends the whole of religion, but it does embrace its most valuable elements. Throughout this Epistle faith is decried, and prominence given to acts of kindness and mercy, to self-control, patience, humility, consideration for others. The Apostle's piety is of a gentle, loveable, but somewhat credulous type, inasmuch as it holds that material blessings may be obtained by prayer. Spiritual pride seems foreign to his nature; he is ready to own that "in many things we all stumble."

The advice in 1 Peter iii. 8, 9, "Be ye all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but, contrariwise, blessing," also dwells on the more specific Christian graces; while the reminder that it is better to "suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing" is a suggestion of the old stoic heroism that is welcome.

Though Peter and Paul were not always in doctrinal agreement, they unite in impressing upon wives the duty of obedience and subjection to their husbands—a view which the thought of to-day, while still pretending to believe it, finds "something musty." The Apostles also agree in their high estimation of the distinctive Christian virtue of charity, which, Peter tells us, "shall cover the multitude of sins"—a saying in sharp contrast with the implications of dogmatic creeds. The second Petrine Epistle, though non-apostolic, gives the excellent advice to "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

The three short Epistles attributed to the Apostle John have for their main theme the quality of love; and some of his expressions are not without terseness and vigour—*e.g.*, "Perfect love casteth out fear." A tone of rationalism pervades the verses, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Perhaps the rationalism really goes a little further than the writer intended.

NOTE.

A few words in reference to the character of Jesus are here inserted, not from any desire to introduce a controversial element into the book, but simply to meet the idea so often expressed, and still more often vaguely cherished, that the moral aspect of Christianity is not fully represented by its

ethical aphorisms, which are admitted to be devoid of originality, but that the system has to be considered as embodied in a personality of unapproachable moral grandeur. It is claimed that in its unique and perfect union of the human and the divine natures the character of Jesus Christ is the best possible evidence of the supernatural origin of his religion.

It is not inappropriate here to point out that, judging from the four Gospels themselves, this claim cannot be sustained. Disregarding the traditional halo with which all the acts and sayings of Jesus are usually surrounded, we find that he does not appear to have reached the highest conceivable point of even human excellence. How, then, can he fairly be thought divine? Interpreting them according to the ordinary and natural meaning of the words, various passages in the Gospels indicate that he was comparatively indifferent to the natural sentiments of family life,[1] going so far as to declare that the purpose of his coming was to cause dissension in households;[2] and that on at least one occasion he treated his mother with something very like rudeness.[3] He many times gave utterance to injunctions which must be pronounced fantastic rather than practical or wise. We may find examples of this in the promise that prayer, even for material benefits, will be answered; in a doctrine of non-resistance which puts a premium on wrongdoing, and in the inculcation of indiscriminate almsgiving. He allowed a personal friend to die when (according to the story) he might have saved him from the pangs of death, and his sisters from a bitter sorrow; and, moreover, told his disciples that this friend's sickness would not have a fatal issue, when he must have known that it would.[4] He so far gave way to temper in an undignified controversy as to speak of persons stated to have been among his own followers as having not God but the devil for their father.[5]

He fostered belief in the harmful notion of demoniacal possession; he marred the purity of his exhortations to righteousness by the suggestion of an altogether disproportionate reward; he taught a revolting doctrine of hell; and, in particular, he is said to have rendered his public teaching obscure with the deliberate intention that his hearers might not be edified, but misled —indeed, that their faculties had been divinely obscured for the express purpose of preventing their conversion.[1]

A single fault is enough to demolish the claim to perfection, and here we have several faults—and, if the records are to be believed, faults not always of slight importance.

It is, of course, possible that the records may not, as they stand, be perfectly accurate; that corruptions and errors may have crept into the text. But, if so, what becomes of the Christian doctrine that these records were divinely inspired? And if that is abandoned, where is the evidence that the life of Jesus Christ was a divine and supernatural manifestation? What value attaches to a theory which, on the strength of doubtfully veracious documents, attributes both perfect manhood and perfect godhead to a being who, according to those very records, did not manifest either?

Again, human perfection implies the highest possible development of every part of human nature, intellectual as well as moral. There is no reason to suppose that Jesus was intellectually the greatest of men, even if he were morally the greatest.

A further point should not be forgotten, especially as a Christian writer uses it as an argument against the character of Buddha being morally perfect. Out of a life of between thirty and forty years the Christian Gospels deal (and that in a most fragmentary way) with the events of, at most, three years. Is it perfectly certain that Jesus committed no fault during the period of which no records whatever exist?

These considerations are adduced merely to show that, in our estimate of Christian ethics, the alleged perfect character of their Founder has not been left out of account.

[1] Matthew x. 37; Luke ii. 49, viii. 21.
[2] Matthew x. 34–36. [3] John ii. 4.
[4] *Ibid*, xi. [5] *Ibid*, viii. 31 and 44.

[1] John xii. 40.

HINDUISM

At first sight one would think that a religion professed by more than half the King's subjects would possess strong claims to the attention and interest of the English people. Yet there is no leading religion of which the English people know so little as that which prevails in our great Eastern dependency. The causes for this are not difficult to discover. One is that the various Hindu faiths rest on a firm basis of pessimism. They assume, with all the force of conviction, that life is a calamity rather than a field of duty and of pleasure, and thus fail to arouse the sympathy of the European, who persists in thinking that life is, on the whole, worth living. Another reason is that Hinduism, whatever it may be in theory, is in practice a system of idolatry, of the worship of a vast multitude of foolish and ineffectual gods. Another potent cause of our indifference is that in Brahmanism the subtle Indian mind has spun a speculative web of such extraordinary complexity, and such portentous dimensions, that fully to understand it would exhaust the labours of a lifetime. Within our brief limits it is utterly impossible to give the baldest outline of the religious beliefs of the Indian people, and the task is therefore better left unattempted. Even our simple design of giving a brief view of the best moral features of the Brahmanic faith is hampered by a certain difficulty of finding suitable examples among the dense clouds of metaphysical extravagance, and the endless puerile ceremonial, which form so large a proportion of the sacred books of the East.

From these books it is possible to extract a philosophy of pure and lofty spiritual tendency, though the popular belief has added to it the worship of a vast number of trivial gods and the practice of rites, sacrifices, and austerities with which none but a monk of the Thebaid could sympathise. Professor Monier Williams says: "It is remarkable that, with all their diversities, the Hindu populations throughout India have a religious faith which, preserved as it is in one language and one literature, furnishes a good evidence of the original unity of the Indo-Aryan immigrants, while it faithfully reflects the present diversified character of the vast country in which it prevails. It is a creed based on an original, simple, pantheistic doctrine, but branching out into an endless variety of polytheistic superstitions."[1] The leading feature of this creed is that "nothing really exists but the one Universal Spirit called Brahman, and whatever appears to exist separately from that Spirit is mere illusion"[2]—a doctrine which is essentially an anticipation of certain speculations of our own time that appear to have been regarded by their authors as the highest attainments of philosophical theism. Hinduism is "all-tolerant, all-compliant, all-comprehensive, all-absorbing. It has its spiritual and its material aspect, its esoteric and exoteric, its subjective and objective, its rational and irrational, its pure and impure......Those who rest in ceremonial observances find it all-sufficient; those who deny the efficacy of works, and make faith the one requisite, need not wander from its pale; those who are addicted to sensual objects may have their tastes gratified; those who delight in meditating on the nature of God and man, the relation of matter and spirit, the mystery of separate existence, and the origin of evil, may here indulge their love of speculation."[3] The earlier por-

[1] *Hinduism*, pp. 10–11.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 11.
[3] *Ibid*, pp. 12–13.

tions of this enormous Sanskrit literature embody what may be termed physiolatry, or the worship of material forms, another represents ritual and sacrifice; a third expresses rationalistic and pantheistic philosophy; the law books contain the regulations of caste and domestic life; while other books represent the principle of love for and devotion to personal gods. The whole of these books are not regarded as being specially sacred in their origin, though large portions of them are held to have been given by direct revelation from Divine sources, the remainder being regarded as valuable tradition.

Hinduism is a faith which does not gather round the person of a real being, whether human or believed to be Divine. It is based on a collection of ancient Sanskrit writings, the principal of which are known as the Vedas, a word implying knowledge. These Vedas are in four divisions :—

The Rig-Veda, or Hymn of Praise.

The Sama-Veda, or Book of Chants.

The Yagur-Veda, or Book of Sacrificial Formulas.

The Atharva-Veda, or Book of Incantations.

The first of these is probably, with the exception of the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," the oldest literary document in the world, and contains hymns in use by the Aryan tribes who settled in India between 1,500 and 2,000 years before Christ. A large portion of the other Vedas consists of extracts from the Rig-Veda, though the fourth contains many hymns of a later date, and of Brahmanic origin.

The pantheistic doctrines of the Brahmans are well expressed in the following extract from that portion of the Vedas known as the Upanishads, a term implying that which lies beneath the surface :—

"Whate'er exists within this universe
Is all to be regarded as enveloped
By the great Lord, as if wrapped in a vesture.
There is one only Being who exists
Unmoved, yet moving swifter than the mind;
Who far outstrips the senses, though as gods
They strive to reach him; who, himself at rest,
Transcends the fleetest flights of other beings;
Who, like the air, supports all vital action.
He moves, yet moves not; he is far, yet near;
He is within this universe. Whoe'er beholds
All living creatures as in him, and him—
The universal Spirit—as in all,
Henceforth regards no creature with contempt."

This Upanishad philosophy teaches the following doctrines :—

(1) The eternity of the soul, both before and after its earthly life.

(2) The eternity of the matter or substance out of which the universe has been evolved.

(3) That the soul can exercise conscious thought and volition only when connected by means of bodily organism with external objects.

(4) That in the union of soul and body lies the source of human misery.

(5) That, in order to accomplish the working out of the consequences of acts, the soul must undergo punishments or receive rewards, though these punishments and rewards are neither complete nor final.

(6) That the transmigration of the soul through many bodies is the true explanation of the existence of evil in the world.[1]

A close examination of these books has shown modern scholars that the social condition of the people among whom the Rig-Veda originated was not purely pastoral or nomadic, as had been supposed, but, on the contrary, was one of comparative civilisation. They dwelt in towns and cities; their kings were powerful and wealthy. They practised the arts of agriculture, weaving, melting precious metals, the manufacture of mail and golden ornaments. They used the needle for the making of clothes; they had musical instruments to delight the ear. In ships they dared the perils of the ocean; they had some knowledge of medicine, astronomy, law. The race that produced the Vedas had within it the possibilities of Western civilisation.

While the Vedas represent the first distinct period in the history of the Hindu religion, in which, for the most part, the elementary powers of nature

[1] *Hinduism*, pp. 49–51.

were deified and worshipped, the second period is represented by the Brahmanic system, in which a higher level of speculative thought and moral aspiration is discernible, though with a rapidly-growing tendency to ritual and formality. The main features of this period are the body of laws attributed to Manu, and the great epic poems of the Ramayana and the Mahâbhârata. The former of these poems is an account of the seventh incarnation of the God Vishnu. The latter, the longest poetic work known to exist, relates, in some 200,000 lines, the quarrels of certain rival families, many legends and episodes being interspersed. One of these episodes, and the most valuable portion of the work, forms a volume by itself; it is known as the "Bhagavad-gita," or "Revelations from the Deity," and contains passages of great beauty and depth of insight.

The third period is that of the *Puranas*, or traditions upon which the popular idolatrous creed is founded, which creed represents a great decline from the comparative simplicity of the older faith.

The fervent sincerity of the Hindu faith (taking it at its best) is well exemplified in the following verses from the Vedic hymns to Varuna, best of the gods:—

> "However we break thy laws from day to day, men as we are, O god Varuna,
> Do not deliver us unto death, nor to the blow of the furious, nor to the wrath of the spiteful.[1]
>
> . . . . .
>
> Let me not yet, O Varuna! enter into the house of clay; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!
> If I go along trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind, have mercy, almighty, have mercy!
> Through want of strength, thou strong and bright god, have I done wrong; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!
> Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waters! have mercy, almighty, have mercy!
> Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host, whenever we break the law through thoughtlessness, punish us not, O God, for that offence."[1]

So many different conceptions are embodied in the Vedas that consistency is not to be looked for; but the fact that hundreds of years before the Christian era such ideas as the following could be expressed by "heathen" thinkers deserves to be noted. The quotation is from one of the hymns of the Rig-Veda, rendered into English verse by Sir M. Monier Williams:—

> "What god shall we adore with sacrifice?
> Him let us praise, the golden child that rose
> In the beginning, who was born the lord—
> The one sole lord of all that is—who made
> The earth and formed the sky, who giveth life,
> Who giveth strength, whose bidding gods revere,
> Whose hiding-place is immortality,
> Whose shadow, death; who by his might is king
> Of all the breathing, sleeping, waking world."[2]

Another hymn expresses a familiar Christian conception:—

> "The mighty Varuna, who rules above, looks down
> Upon these worlds his kingdom, as if close at hand.
> When men imagine they do aught by stealth, he knows it.
> No one can stand or walk or softly glide along,
> Or hide in dark recess or lurk in secret cell,
> But Varuna detects him, and his movements spies.
> Two persons may devise some plot, together sitting,
> And think themselves alone; but he, the king, is there—
> A third—and sees all."[3]

A pure, broad, human feeling animates the following extract from a hymn to Indra:—

> "Thou art our guardian, advocate, and friend,
> A brother, father, mother, all combined.
> Most fatherly of fathers, we are thine,
> And thou art ours. Oh! let thy pitying soul
> Turn to us in compassion when we praise thee,
> And slay us not for one sin or for many.
> Deliver us to-day, to-morrow, every day."[4]

The ideas expressed in these extracts

[1] Clodd, *Childhood of Religions*, p. 146.

[1] Clodd, *Childhood of Religions*, p. 147.
[2] Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, p. 27.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 28. [4] *Ibid*, p. 29.

are practically identical with the conceptions which the most advanced communities hold concerning a Supreme Being. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that all these ancient hymns are of the same lofty type. On the contrary, puerile formalities and foolish superstitions abound in them. Although in a general sense religious ideas widen with the growth of civilisation, they have their periods of retrogression; the flowing tide is followed by the ebb. Religious faith is, indeed, peculiarly liable to degenerate when handed down from great minds to small ones. Creeds, sacrifices, ceremonies spring from an inability to grasp the great conceptions in the light of which their futility is manifested. The oldest portions of the Vedas are precisely those which do not countenance the monstrous polytheism of later times. According to Sir M. Monier Williams, they do not "support any of those objectionable practices, superstitions, and opinions of the present day for which they were once, through ignorance of their contents, supposed to be an authority. The Vedic hymns contain no allusion to the doctrine of transmigration of souls, which is a conspicuous characteristic of the Hindu creed in the later system. Nor do they afford any sanction to the prohibition of widow-marriages, the encouragement of child-marriages, the iron rules of caste, and the interdiction of foreign travel. Nor is there in them any evidence that the personifications of the forces of nature were represented by images or symbols carved out of wood or stone. On the contrary, it may be taken as almost certain that there were no idols and no temples to hold images in Vedic times."[1]

Man's consciousness of sin pointed out to him the need of punishment, but in all ancient religions the sense of individual responsibility was weak. As long as a given punishment was inflicted for a given sin it mattered little on whom it fell. It was quite a secondary consideration whether the sinner paid the penalty in his own person or by deputy. This idea conflicts with the most elementary modern ideas of justice, but it seems to have been practically universal in ancient communities. From it sprang that conception of vicarious sacrifice which has so greatly influenced the religions that have risen to power among men. Human ingenuity soon discovered that expiation was easier than suffering in person; and, as a result, a system of expiatory sacrifice gradually came into operation. This demanded a priesthood. The rise of the Brahmans to almost unlimited power brought about a further degeneration of the earlier religious faith. Sacrifice is religion made easy; consequently, sacrifice spread until the land was saturated with blood, and the elaborate ritual required a vast organisation of priests for its due performance. Against this system Gautama, Buddha, and many Brahman philosophers rose in righteous and successful revolt. The truth that vicarious suffering cannot benefit the sinner was successfully brought home to the mass of the people until sacrifices had virtually ceased, and there was no land where animal life was so tenderly reverenced as it was, and is, in India. The Brahman doctrine of the identity of the human soul with the divine involved the perception that the caste distinctions invented by the priests were useless, though the doctrine of caste has taken so deep a root in the life of the Hindus that no power seems likely to destroy it entirely. The following passage expresses this Pantheistic phase of Brahmanism:—

> I am the taste in water; I am the light of the sun and moon; I am Om[1] in all the Vedas, sound in space, and manliness in human beings; I am the fragrant smell in the earth, refulgence in the fire; I am life in all beings, and penance in those who perform penance.[2]

The *Bhagavad-gita* is fairly rich in

[1] Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, p. 31.

[1] *Om* is the closest designation of the Deity.

[2] *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. viii., *Bhagavad-gita*, ch. vii.

passages worthy of quotation, of which the following may be adduced as specimens :—

He whose heart is not agitated in the midst of calamities, who has no longing for pleasures, and from whom the feelings of affection, fear, and wrath have departed, is called a sage of steady mind (ch. ii.).

He sees truly who sees all actions to be in every way done by Nature alone, and likewise the self to be not the doer (ch. xiii.).

That gift is said to be good which is given because it ought to be given to one who can do no service in return, at a proper place and time, and to a proper person (ch. xvii.).

Here is a little sermon on self-control :—

The self-restrained man, who moves among objects with senses under the control of his own self, and free from affection and aversion, obtains tranquillity. When there is tranquillity all his miseries are destroyed, for the mind of him whose heart is tranquil soon becomes steady. He who is not self-restrained has no steadiness of mind; nor has he who is not self-restrained perseverance in the pursuit of self-knowledge. There is no tranquillity for him who does not persevere in the pursuit of self-knowledge, and whence can there be happiness for one who is not tranquil? For the heart which follows the rambling senses leads away his judgment, as the wind leads a boat astray upon the waters (*Bhagavad-gita*, ch. ii. p. 70).

The extracts from this book given by Sir M. Monier Williams are in verse :—

"Whate'er thou dost perform, whate'er thou eatest,
Whate'er thou givest to the poor, whate'er
Thou offerest in sacrifice, whate'er
Thou doest as an act of holy penance,
Do all as if to me, O Arjuna."[1]

Another parallels a story in Luke :—

"Entangled in a hundred worldly snares,
Self-seeking men, by ignorance deluded,
Strive by unrighteous means to pile up riches.
Then, in their self-complacency they say:
'This acquisition I have made to-day,
That I will gain to-morrow, so much pelf
Is hoarded up already, so much more
Remains that I have yet to treasure up.
This enemy I have destroyed, him also,
And others in their turn I will despatch.
I am a lord; I will enjoy myself;
I'm wealthy, noble, strong, successful, happy,
I'm absolutely perfect, no one else
In all the world can be compared to me.

[1] *Hinduism*, p. 212.

Now I will offer up a sacrifice,
Give gifts with lavish hand and be triumphant.
Such men, befooled by endless, vain conceits,
Caught in the meshes of the world's illusion,
Immersed in sensuality, descend
Down to the foulest hell of unclean spirits."[1]

The God Krishna exhorts Arjuna to energetic action in these admirable lines :—

"Perform all necessary acts, for action
Is better than inaction, none can live
By sitting still and doing nought; it is
By action only that a man attains
Immunity from action. Yet in working
Ne'er work for recompense; let the act's motive
Be in the act itself. Know that work
Proceeds from the Supreme. I am the pattern
For man to follow; know that I have done
All acts already, nought remains for me
To gain by action, yet I work for ever
Unweariedly, and this whole universe
Would perish if I did not work my work."[2]

The *Bhagavad-gita* has been versified by Sir Edwin Arnold, under the title of "The Song Celestial," from which a few quotations may be given as illustrations of its remarkable philosophic power and religious beauty :—

"Indestructible,
Learn thou, the Life is, spreading life through all,
It cannot anywhere, by any means,
Be anywise diminished, stayed, or changed.
But for these fleeting frames which it informs
With spirit deathless, endless, infinite,
They perish." (Book ii.)

"Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall case to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless, and deathless, and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever;
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems."
(*Ibid.*)

"That man alone is wise
Who keeps the mastery of himself! If one
Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs
Attraction; from attraction grows desire;
Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds
Recklessness, then the memory, all betrayed,
Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,
Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone."
(*Ibid.*)

"No man shall 'scape from act

[1] *Hinduism*, p. 218. [2] *Ibid*, p. 218.

By shunning action; nay, and none shall come
By mere renouncements unto perfectness."
(Book iii.)

"Resist the false, soft sinfulness which saps
Knowledge and judgment! Yea, the world is strong,
But what discerns it stronger, and the mind
Strongest; and high o'er all the ruling Soul."
(*Ibid.*)

"Religion is not his who too much fasts
Or too much feasts, nor his who sleeps away
An idle mind; nor his who wears to waste
His strength in vigils. Nay, Arjuna! call
That the true piety which most removes
Earth-aches and ills, where one is moderate
In eating, and in resting, and in sport;
Measured in wish and act; sleeping betimes,
Waking betimes for duty." (Book vi.)

"No heart that holds one right desire
Treadeth the road of loss! He who should fail,
Desiring righteousness, cometh at death
Unto the Region of the Just; dwells there
Measureless years, and, being born anew,
Beginneth life again in some fair home
Amid the mild and happy." (*Ibid.*)

"Who hateth nought
Of all which lives, living himself benign,
Compassionate, from arrogance exempt,
Exempt from love of self, unchangeable
By good or ill; patient, contented, firm
In faith, mastering himself, true to his word,
Seeking me, heart and soul; vowed unto me—
That man I love! Who humbleth not his kind,
And is not troubled by them; clear of wrath,
Living too high for gladness, grief, or fear,
That man I love!" (Book xii.)

"Fearlessness, singleness of soul, the will
Always to strive for wisdom; opened hand
And governed appetites; and piety,
And love of lonely study; humbleness,
Uprightness, heed to injure nought which lives,
Truthfulness, slowness unto wrath, a mind
That lightly letteth go what others prize;
And equanimity and charity
Which spieth no man's faults; and tenderness
Towards all that suffer; a contented heart,
Fluttered by no desires; a bearing mild,
Modest, and grave, with manhood nobly mixed,
With patience, fortitude, and purity;
An unrevengeful spirit, never given
To rate itself too high—such be the signs,
O Indian Prince! of him whose feet are set
On that fair path which leads to heavenly birth." (Book xvi.)

This eloquent epitome of virtue is alone sufficient to show how little the East has to learn from the West in regard to the essential ideas of religion. We know of no other passage in the sacred books of any religion which more beautifully expresses the union of man's finer qualities. It enables one to understand Schlegel's outburst of delight on reading the *Bhagavad-gita*, and the warm appreciation it has met with from many other European scholars.

We may compare the prose versions of the last two extracts as given in the Sacred Books of the East with the poetical rendering of Sir Edwin Arnold, who has certainly improved the form while retaining the essential idea:—

That devotee of mine who hates no being, who is friendly and compassionate, who is free from egoism, and from the idea that this or that is mine, to whom happiness and misery are alike, who is forgiving, contented, constantly devoted, self-restrained, and firm in his determinations, and whose mind and understanding are devoted to me, he is dear to me. He through whom the world is not agitated, and who is not agitated by the world, who is free from joy, and anger, and fear, and agitation, he, too, is dear to me (ch. 12).

Freedom from fear, purity of heart, perseverance in pursuit of knowledge and abstraction of mind, gifts, self-restraint, and sacrifice, study of the Vedas, penance, straightforwardness, harmlessness, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, freedom from the habit of backbiting, compassion for all beings, freedom from avarice, gentleness, modesty, absence of vain activity, noble-mindedness, forgiveness, courage, purity, freedom from a desire to injure others, absence of vanity—these are his who is born to godlike endowments (ch. 16).

Another episode in the *Mahâbhârata*, called the *Sanatsugâtîya*, contains a fine conception of knowledge:—

It appears not as white, as red, nor, again, as black, nor again as grey, nor tawny. It dwells not on earth, nor in the sky; nor does it bear a body in this ocean-like world. It is not in the stars, nor does it dwell in the lightning, nor is its form to be seen in the clouds, nor in the air, nor in the deities; it is not to be seen in the moon, nor in the sun. It is not to be seen in texts nor hymns. It is seen in the self of a man of high views (ch. 4).

In the same book we find the brief and valuable injunction that "we should ever and always be doing good" (ch. 6).

From another division of the great

epic, known as the *Anugîtâ*, we extract the following :—

A man who is the friend of all, who endures all, who is devoted to tranquillity, who has subdued his senses, and from whom fear and wrath have departed, and who is self-possessed, is released. He who moves among all beings as if they were like himself, who is self-controlled, pure, free from vanity and egoism, he is indeed released from everything. And he who is released, who is equable towards both life and death, and likewise pleasure and pain, and gain and loss, and what is agreeable and odious...... he who has no enemy, who has no kinsman, who has no child, who has abandoned piety, wealth, and lust altogether, and who has no desire, is released (ch. 4).

Such complete detachment from all that, to the European, makes life worth living is neither practicable nor desirable to the Western temperament; but the ideal of utter purity and self-control is valuable as a corrective to an incessant and absorbing activity in material pursuits.

Another passage from the *Anugîtâ* shows considerable philosophic insight. It is from a dialogue between the Mind and the Senses. The Mind says :—

The nose smells not without me; the tongue does not perceive taste ; the eye does not take in colour ; the skin does not become aware of any object of touch. Without me the ear does not, in any way, hear sound. I am the eternal chief among all elements. Without me the senses never shine, like an empty dwelling, or like fires, the flames of which are extinct.

To this the Senses reply :—

This would be true, as you believe, if you, without us, enjoyed the enjoyments derived from our objects. If, when we are extinct, there is pleasure and support of life, and if you enjoyed enjoyments, then what you believe is true......Granted that we have connections with our respective qualities, and granted that we have no perception of each other's qualities; still, without us you have no perception, and so long no happiness can accrue to you (ch. 7).

Another aphorism from the same book is worth remembering :—

The instructor, the learner, the hearer, and the enemy, are always within (ch. 11).

A close resemblance to Shakespeare's "There is no darkness but ignorance" is found in the expression, "By pure knowledge one is released from all sins" (*Ibid*, ch. 35). And the proverb, "Virtue is its own reward," is analogous to this : "Those wise and talented men who perform actions with faith, free from any connection with expectations, perceive correctly" (*ibid*).

The *Anugîtâ* sums up the duties of the good as follows :—

Joy, pleasure, nobility, enlightenment, and happiness also, absence of stinginess, absence of fear, contentment, faith, forgiveness, courage, harmlessness, equability, truth, straightforwardness, absence of wrath, absence of calumniation, purity, dexterity, valour (ch. 23).

In the *Laws of Manu* we find a great body of precepts which enforce the practical duties of life from the Brahman point of view. Many, perhaps the majority, of these laws are ceremonious to a degree which appears to us absurd, as well as tedious and vexatious in their strict regulations of the most trivial acts of life, and even the commonest functions of the body. But on this evidence of a priestly power, more galling than any which in the Middle Ages vexed and cramped the growing life of Europe, it is no part of our purpose to dwell. Rather would we call attention to a few passages in which the priesthood of ancient India enacted laws wise in themselves and beneficial in their tendency.

The following quotations are from the English translation of the *Laws of Manu* contained in vol. xxv. of the *Sacred Books of the East* :—

To act solely from a desire for rewards is not laudable, yet an exemption from that desire is not to be found in this world (ii. 2).

Desire is never extinguished by the enjoyment of desired objects. It only grows stronger, like a fire fed with clarified butter (ii. 94).

By honouring his father, his mother, and his teacher, all that ought to be done by man is accomplished ; that is clearly the highest duty ; every other act is a subordinate duty (ii. 237).

Where women are honoured there the gods are pleased, but where they are not honoured no sacred rite yields rewards (iii. 56).

A guest who is sent by the setting sun in the evening must not be driven away by a householder. Whether he have come at supper-time,

or at an inopportune moment, he must not stay in the house without entertainment (iii. 105).

Let a man not, even though in pain, speak words cutting others to the quick; let him not injure others in thought or deed; let him not utter speeches which make others afraid of him, since that will prevent him from gaining heaven (ii. 161).

Let him say what is true, let him say what is pleasing, let him utter no disagreeable truth, and let him utter no agreeable falsehood; that is the eternal law (iv. 138).

Let him not insult those who have redundant limbs, or are deficient in limbs, nor those destitute of knowledge, nor very aged men, nor those who have no beauty or wealth, nor those who are of low birth (iv. 141).

Let him, though suffering in consequence of his righteousness, never turn his heart to unrighteousness, for he will see the speedy overthrow of unrighteous wicked men (iv. 171).

Unrighteousness practised in this world does not at once produce its fruit, but, advancing slowly, it cuts off the roots of him who committed it (iv. 172).

If the punishment falls not on the offender himself, it falls on his sons; if not on the sons, at least on his grandsons; but an iniquity once committed never fails to produce fruit to him who wrought it (iv. 173).

Let a man avoid the acquisition of wealth and the gratification of his desires, if they are opposed to the sacred law or offensive to men (iv. 176).

Giving no pain to any creature, let him solely accumulate spiritual merit, for the sake of acquiring a companion in the next world (iv. 238).

For in the next world neither father nor mother, nor sons, nor relations, stay to be his companions: spiritual merit alone remains with him (iv. 239).

Single is each being born, single it dies; single it enjoys the reward of its virtue, single it suffers the punishment of its sin (iv. 240).

These allusions to a future state appear to embody the doctrine of *Karma*, that by the practice of good deeds a degree of spiritual merit is acquired which will reduce the chances of future, and most probably painful, re-births. They teach, not the immortality of the individual soul, but rather the means by which the soul may escape from immortality—may least painfully lay down the burden of existence. The emphasis with which the results of unrighteousness are pronounced to be inevitable reveals a deep moral insight, while the tender consideration for others shown in many of the ancient laws is a highly commendable feature.

The following verses are given by Professor Monier Williams:—

"Depend not on another, rather lean
Upon thyself; trust to thine own exertions.
Subjection to another's will gives pain;
True happiness consists in self-reliance.
(iv. 160).

"Strive to complete the task thou hast commenced;
Wearied, renew thy efforts once again;
Again fatigued, once more the work begin;
So shalt thou earn success and fortune win."
(ix. 300).

Here is a striking appeal to conscience:—

If thou thinkest, O friend of virtue! with respect to thyself, "I am alone," know that that sage who witnesses all virtuous acts and all crimes resides ever in thy heart (viii. 91).

The following need no comment:—

If a man does anything for the sake of his happiness in another world to the detriment of those whom he is bound to maintain, that produces evil results for him, both while he lives and when he is dead (x. 10).

He only is a perfect man who consists of three persons united—his wife, himself, and his offspring (ix. 47).

In proportion as a man who has done wrong himself confesses it, even so far is he freed from guilt, as a snake from its slough (xi. 229).

In proportion as his heart loathes his evil deed, even so far is his body freed from that guilt (xi. 230).

He who has committed a sin and has repented is freed from that sin; but he is purified only by the resolution of ceasing to sin, and thinking: "I will do so no more."

How much more simple, how far more conducive to peace, is such a doctrine than the futile reliance on a system of vicarious sacrifice!

In their purer parts the Hindu scriptures do not rank the great ones of the earth beyond the reach of the law:—

Day and night a king must strenuously exert himself to conquer his senses, for he alone who has conquered his own senses can keep his subjects in obedience (vii. 44).

Where another common man would be fined one *kârshâpana*, the king shall be fined one thousand; that is the settled rule (viii. 336).

Gambling and betting let the king exclude from his realm; those two vices cause the destruction of the kingdoms of princes (ix. 221).

One commodity mixed with another must not be sold as pure, nor bad wine as good, nor less than the proper quantity or weight (viii. 203).

Neither a father, nor a teacher, nor a friend, nor a mother, nor a wife, nor a son, nor a domestic priest, must be left unpunished by a king if they do not keep within their duty (viii. 335).

In the "Sacred Laws of the Aryas" we find a singular, but probably wholesome, punishment for wife-desertion :—

He who has unjustly forsaken his wife shall put on an ass's skin with the hair turned outside, and beg in seven houses, saying : "Give alms to him who forsook his wife." That shall be his livelihood for six months.

The curious persistency with which the Hindu mind clings to its vague notions of pre-existence is shown by the subjoined quotations from a code which appeared about the middle of the first century of our era—*i.e.*, probably 500 years later than that of Manu :—

The success of every action depends on destiny and on a man's own effort; but destiny is evidently nothing but the result of a man's act in a former state of existence.

Some expect the whole result from destiny, or from the inherent nature of a thing; some expect it from the lapse of time, and some from a man's own effort; other persons of wiser judgment expect it from a combination of all these.[1]

The extracts given show with sufficient clearness that, as Sir Monier Williams says, "the Hindus are a profoundly religious people. A religion of some kind they must have—a religion which will stir the depths of the heart, and give room for the exercise of faith and love."[2] It is interesting to note that, in spite of the absorbingly religious spirit manifested in Hinduism—a spirit which, for the most part, runs in the direction of superstition—the claims of the intellectual and critical faculties of humanity are not entirely overlooked. Compared with the gross credulity of the age in which it arose, the teaching of Gautama must be pronounced of a powerfully Rationalistic tendency. Though ultimately overwhelmed by the inferior faith against which it struggled for a time successfully, and driven from its native soil, Buddhism may be termed the Protestantism of the Indian religions. Perhaps its influence would, in the long run, have been greater still had it not been (at least in the estimation of Europeans) so heavily weighted by its mass of mystical and unverifiable doctrines.

[1] Monier Williams's *Hinduism*, p. 71.
[2] *Hinduism*, p. 184.

To the modern Rationalist the following vigorously expressed piece of scepticism, with its curious mingling of sense and nonsense, will come as a pleasant surprise. It embodies the opinions of a Materialistic sect known as the Carvakas, which at some apparently unknown period once flourished in India :—

"No heaven exists, no final liberation,
No soul, no other world, no rights of caste,
No recompense for acts......
If victims, slaughtered at a sacrifice,
Are raised to heavenly mansions, why should not
The sacrificer immolate his father?
If offerings of food can satisfy
Hungry departed spirits, why supply
The man, who goes a journey, with provisions?
His friend at home can feed him with oblations.
If those abiding in celestial spheres
Are filled with food presented upon earth,
Why should not those who live in upper stories
Be nourished by a meal spread out below?
While life endures let life be spent in ease
And merriment; let a man borrow money
From all his friends, and feast on melted butter.
How can this body, when reduced to dust,
Revisit earth? And, if a ghost can pass
To other worlds, why does not strong affection
For those he leaves behind attract him back?
The costly rites enjoined for those who die
Are a mere means of livelihood, devised
By sacerdotal cunning—nothing more.
The three composers of the triple Veda
Were rogues, or evil spirits, or buffoons.
The recitation of mysterious words
And jabber of the priests is simple nonsense."[1]

If all religious dogmas had been judged by this sceptical and logical spirit, the world would have been the happier and better.

[1] Monier Williams's *Hinduism*, p. 225.

BUDDHISM

BUDDHISM is a system of faith, philosophy, and practice originated, in the sixth century before the Christian era, by Prince Siddartha, son of the ruler of one of the small States, probably Nepaul, of Northern India. This remarkable man is known to posterity by various other names, such as Sakya-Muni, or the Sage of the Sakya tribe; Bhagava, the blessed one; Dharma-raja, the king of righteousness; Buddha, the enlightened one. His family name was Gautama, which term, as the most convenient, we shall employ in referring to him.

Saddened by the degeneration which had overtaken the ancient faith of Brahmanism under the sway of the priestly caste, Gautama set himself, after years of spiritual struggle and intense meditation, to establish a system without theological teaching of any sort, having no definite theories concerning the Supreme Being or the immortality of the soul, but basing its appeal on the importance of good works and moral purity. Some of its doctrines, notably those of Karma and Nirvāna, are of a nature which does not appeal to the sympathy of the European, and are indeed scarcely capable of being clearly expressed; but to the Oriental these dreamy abstractions are full of charm, and largely aid in giving Buddhism a force and verity which the faiths of the West struggle to maintain in the restless bosom of the modern world.

Buddhism cannot be understood without a knowledge of the life of its founder, of the conditions amid which he lived, and under which his great faith arose. But it is no part of our purpose to outline the life of Sakya Muni. A youth of luxury, saddened by spiritual uneasiness; a brief span of wedded love; the renunciation of home, wife, and child; a few years of earnest striving for the truth; the dawn, and then the noontide, of enlightenment; and, finally, a long life of poverty, of preaching, and of doing good—these constitute a record of a nature so pure and beautiful as to win not merely the passionate devotion of his followers, but the love and esteem of all to whom knowledge of him has come.

No ethical system can be entirely original, since in every case its broad features have been derived from a common but ever-growing experience. Gautama gave a wider and more logical application to principles which had been enunciated by the sages of those earlier faiths of which his own was the offspring, while adding to them a spirit of greater earnestness and philanthropy. He held that ceremonial religion was worthless, that to every man was set the task of working out in this life his salvation from evil desires. In Buddhism abstract speculation is discouraged as profitless. When Gautama was asked whether the world was eternal or not eternal, he made no reply—a greater proof of wisdom than a vain attempt to unriddle an insoluble problem. The existence of the material world and its conscious inhabitants is accepted as an ultimate fact; everything in the world is in a state of constant though imperceptible change. "The unity of forces which constitutes a sentient being is sooner or later dissolved,"[1] and it is a mere delusion on the part of such a being to think that he is a separate and self-existent entity. To escape from this delusion and its consequent errors is the grand object of the Buddhist. When this has been completely accomplished, the individual has entered the state of Nirvāna. This conception, so strange to the European, so natural to the Buddhist, is defined by Professor Rhys Davids as "the extinction

[1] Rhys Davids's *Buddhism*, p. 88.

of that sinful, grasping condition of mind and heart which would otherwise, according to the great mystery of Karma, be the cause of renewed individual existence. That extinction is to be brought about by, and runs parallel with, the growth of the opposite condition of mind and heart; and it is complete when that opposite condition is reached. Nirvāna is therefore the same thing as a sinless, calm state of mind; and, if translated at all, may best, perhaps, be rendered 'holiness'—holiness, that is, in the Buddhist sense, *perfect peace, goodness, and wisdom.*"[1]

Practical ethics make up almost the whole of Gautama's veritable teaching. And this practical element is embodied in a more systematic form than is manifested by most other religions. Four leading truths have to be grasped:—

1. The existence of pain and sorrow.
2. The cause of pain is desire.
3. Sorrow and suffering cease by the extinction of desire, by *Nirvāna*.
4. Desire is extinguished by leading a virtuous and thoughtful life, the only path to *Nirvāna*.

This path is subdivided into eight branches:—

1. Right views on faith.
2. Right aims or judgment.
3. Right words.
4. Right behaviour or purpose.
5. Right practice or mode of livelihood.
6. Right exertion or obedience.
7. Right mindfulness or memory.
8. Right meditation.

There are four stages or paths through which the pious man passes in the practice of these virtues.

The first is the "entering upon the stream," or conversion, which follows on companionship with the good, the hearing of the law, enlightened reflection, and the practice of virtue. When a man has entered upon this path, he becomes free from the delusion of self, from doubt as to the Buddha and his doctrines, and from the belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies.

[1] *Buddhism*, pp. 111–112.

The second stage is that in which man has become free from the dominion of evil passions. If he has attained this, he will be among those who return only once to this world.

The third stage is that in which every vestige of sensuality and malevolence is destroyed. Such men return no more to this world.

The fourth stage is that of the "*Arahats*," the saintly beings who have become free from all desire for personal existence, either material or immaterial, free also from all pride, self-righteousness, and ignorance. When a man has reached this state,

> He is free from all error; he sees and values all things in this life at their true value; evil desires of all kinds being rooted up from his mind, he only experiences right desires for himself, and tender pity and regard and exalted spiritual love for others..... Let him cultivate goodwill without measure towards the whole world—above, below, around—unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests. Let a man remain steadfastly in this state of mind all the while he is awake, whether he be standing, walking, sitting, or lying down (Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 109).

Such a man has attained Nirvāna in this life; no future re-births will be necessary; his warfare is accomplished, his salvation won.

It will be seen that Buddhism does not offer the direct appeal to selfishness that is found in religions which make the welfare of the individual soul a paramount necessity. The goal of salvation, according to Buddha, lies in the diminished activity, the practical extinction, of the individual identity; and the very purpose of his faith is to foster everything which contributes to this result. The reward of well-doing, therefore, is merely the negative reward of relief from the burden of existence, from the possibility of further struggle. With Europeans the notion that life is, on the whole, a good thing is so deeply ingrained that their only idea of reward lies in its continuance:—

> "'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh life, not death, for which we pant."

With the Buddhist it is precisely the reverse; life is a bad thing, and he is content to find his reward for virtue in the hope that life will come to an end. As the western conception of life colours all western ideas of religion, so does this pessimistic notion lie at the root of the Buddhist faith.

Whatever view we may hold as to the nature of the salvation set before the followers of Gautama, there can be no question as to the remarkable beauty and purity of his moral precepts. Without touching on the metaphysical system which has gathered round them, we content ourselves with a very brief glance at the ethics inculcated by this far-off Eastern teacher.

Gautama left behind him no written works, but his followers believe that his verbal teachings were learnt by heart during his lifetime by his immediate disciples, and faithfully handed down by memory until put into writing; and there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the claim.

When asked to declare what was the chief good, Gautama is said to have replied to the following effect:—

"Not to serve the foolish,
But to serve the wise;
To honour those worthy of honour:
This is the greatest blessing.

. . . .

"To support father and mother,
To cherish wife and child,
To follow a peaceful calling:
This is the greatest blessing.

"To bestow alms and live righteously,
To give help to kindred,
Deeds which cannot be blamed:
These are the greatest blessing.

"To abhor and cease from sin,
Abstinence from strong drink,
Not to be weary in well-doing:
These are the greatest blessing.

"Reverence and lowliness,
Contentment and gratitude,
The hearing of the law at due seasons:
This is the greatest blessing.

. . . .

"Self-restraint and purity,
The knowledge of the noble Truths,
The realisation of Nirvāna:
This is the greatest blessing."[1]

We proceed to give a few passages, necessarily isolated from their context, representing the best that is to be found in the Buddhist faith, but the value of which is not to be under-estimated because often mixed with imperfection and error:—

Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred;
Hatred ceases by love, this is always its nature.

As rain breaks in upon an ill-thatched hut,
So passion breaks in upon the untrained mind.

Follow not after vanity, nor familiarity with the delight of lust,
For the earnest and the thoughtful obtain ample joy.

Not where others fail, or do, or leave undone;
The wise should notice what himself has done or left undone.

Like a beautiful flower, full of colour, without scent,
The fine words of him who does not act accordingly are fruitless.

Like a beautiful flower full of colour, and full of scent,
The fine words of him who acts accordingly are full of fruit.

As long as the sin bears no fruit,
The fool he thinks it honey;
But when the sin ripens,
Then indeed he goes down in sorrow.

One may conquer a thousand thousand men in battle,
But he who conquers himself alone is the greatest victor.

Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, "It cannot overtake me."

As the waterpot fills by even drops of water falling,
The fool gets full of sin, ever gathering little by little.

Let a man make himself what he preaches to others;
The well-subdued may subdue others; one's self indeed is hard to tame.

He who formerly was heedless, and afterwards becomes earnest,
Lights up this world, like the moon escaped from a cloud.

He who holds back rising anger as a rolling chariot,

[1] Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, ch. v.

Him indeed I call a driver: others only hold the reins.

Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good;
Let him conquer the stingy by a gift, the liar by truth.

Not by birth does one become low caste;
Not by birth does one become a Brahman;
By his actions alone one becomes low caste;
By his actions alone one becomes a Brahman.[1]

The thoughtless man, even if he can recite a large portion of the law, but is not a doer of it, has no share in the priesthood, but is like a cowherd counting the cows of others.

Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sea, not if we enter into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world where a man might be freed from an evil deed.

Bad deeds, and deeds hurtful to ourselves, are easy to do; what is beneficial and good, that is very difficult to do.

Let us live happily, then, not hating those who hate us: among men who hate us let us dwell free from hatred.

The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of one's self is difficult to perceive; a man winnows his neighbour's faults like chaff, but his own fault he hides, as a cheat hides the bad die from the gambler.

What ought to be done is neglected, what ought not to be done is done.

If anything is to be done, let a man do it; let him attack it vigorously.

What is the use of plaited hair, O fool; what of the raiment of goat skins? Within thee there is ravening, but the outside thou makest clean.

Let the lay disciple not kill, nor cause to be killed, any living being, nor let him approve of others killing, after having refrained from hurting all creatures, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world.

Then let him abstain from taking anything in any place that has not been given to him, knowing it to belong to another; let him not cause anyone to take nor approve of those that take; let him avoid all sort of theft.

Let the wise man avoid an unchaste life as a burning heap of coals; not being able to live a life of chastity, let him not transgress with another man's wife.

Let no one speak falsely of another in the hall of justice or in the hall of assembly; let him not cause anyone to speak falsely, nor approve of those that speak falsely; let him avoid all sort of untruth.

Let the householder not give himself to intoxicating drinks; let him not cause others to drink, nor approve of those that drink, knowing it to end in madness.

Let a wise man with a believing mind, gladdening the assembly of the mendicants, with food and drink, make distributions according to his ability.

Let him dutifully maintain his parents, and practise an honourable trade; the householder who observes this strenuously goes to the gods.[1]

Many of these passages bear considerable resemblance to parts of the New Testament, sometimes in idea, sometimes in the actual words used; and numerous other parallels are to be traced. One of the most striking of these corresponds to the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is too long to quote here in full; but the following is a condensed version of the story:—

A young man, seduced by bad company, left his father's home and wandered to a distant country. For many years the father searched for him; while the son wandered from place to place begging food and clothing. At length he reached a splendid house, where he was intending to beg; but, seized with fear, hurried away. The father knew of his arrival, and sent out men to bring him home. The frightened wanderer imagined they were about to slay him; and the father, seeing his fear, did not reveal himself, but put the son to manual work, and lodged him in a small hovel near his own mansion. Gradually the consciousness of manhood was aroused in the breast of the degraded son, and after many years of slow improvement the father called a great gathering of friends and nobles, even the king himself, and formally acknowledged his son, and made over to him his whole property.

In several important respects there is a remarkable analogy between Buddhism and Christianity. In each case we find the same conception of righteousness, as depending, not upon ritual, but upon the purity of the inner life. We find righteousness announced as the noblest of human aspirations, taking precedence

[1] Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, ch. v.

[1] Berry, *Christianity and Buddhism*, Appendix ii.

of all worldly aims and advantages. Sin also is not an external matter, but a growth from within; the most strenuous effort is required to overcome it, and its consequences are inevitable. So, too, the pleasures of the world are hollow and unsatisfying, delusive in their nature, uncertain in their duration. And, again, the path of duty is hard; but it is necessary to the higher development of character that it should be followed. Self-control, purity of heart, truth, goodwill to others, are necessary to the proper fulfilment of social duties; and, while keeping free from the snares of the world and of self, these social duties must not be neglected by laymen, but actively pursued.

An absorbing spirituality, an intensely earnest appreciation of the ethical factors of life, are marked features of Gautama's teaching. Buddhism is an exaltation of the mind. All physical forms, being composed of material elements, are subject to the law of dissolution. Sorrow, pain, decay, and death are the necessary results of man's bodily existence. Yet of a purely immaterial existence Buddhism knows nothing. "The way to be freed from doubt and heresy lies through freedom from impurity and revenge, and evil longings of all kinds."[1] If a man wishes to understand the real facts of life, he must "purify his mind from all unholy desires and passions; right actions spring from a pure mind, and to the pure in heart all things are open."[2] The great aim of the system is the spread of universal charity: "True enlightenment and true freedom are complete only in love. Self-conquest and universal charity are the foundation thoughts of Buddhism."[3] According to Buddhism, "There is no magic in any outward act; every one's salvation consists of and depends entirely on a modification and growth in his own inner nature, to be brought about by his own self-control and diligence."[4]

The characteristics of self-reliance, personal independence, and individual effort are brought out more strongly in Buddhism than perhaps in any other religion. The doctrine that man is, in the moral sense, the architect of his own fate, that his happiness will be in proportion to his deserts, cannot be objected to on the score of unfairness. It is precisely the disbelief in supernatural aid which throws upon man the onus of working out his own salvation. It does not involve faith in the paradox that the effort is, after all, not his own, but that of a higher power controlling both the will and the actions. And the salvation is not thought to be a mere escape from horrible punishment; it is put on the higher plane of release from the dominion of sin and progressive growth in goodness—a doctrine which even Christianity has been sadly slow to instil into its devotees.

It is proper to point out that the Buddhist system inculcates one code for men in general, who continue to mingle freely with their fellows, and another for the "mendicants," or those who have embraced an exclusively religious life. Of the following ten moral precepts five are of universal obligation—viz., not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to be drunken. Those who have become "mendicants" in the hope of more speedily attaining Nirvana are recommended to obey the following rules, in addition: to abstain from food after midday; to abstain from dances, theatrical representations, songs, and music; to abstain from personal ornaments and perfumes; to abstain from a lofty and luxurious couch; to abstain from the use of gold and silver. The regular ascetics or monks obey a number of severe restrictions: to dress in rags, to beg their simple food, which must not exceed one meal a day, to live in the forests, except during the rainy season, with no shelter but the trees, and not to lie down even for sleep.[1]

As a corollary from its non-theistic basis, Buddhism dispenses with prayer.

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Buddhism."
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] Rhys Davids's *Buddhism.*

[1] Rhys Davids's *Buddhism*, ch. vi.

In view of the degree to which in many other religions, prayer has been abused and debased by being employed mainly with the idea of procuring material blessings, and even unwarrantable forms of personal satisfaction, such as vengeance upon enemies, it is no discredit to Gautama that he should have discountenanced supplication to a superior power, whose very existence appeared doubtful. Various forms of meditation, however, were prescribed, which at dawn and at the close of day were to uplift and purify the mind. If the chief value of prayer is as a spiritual exercise, little distinction can be drawn between actual petition and such meditations as the wish that all men might be free from sorrow, pain, and evil desire; that enmity must be laid aside; that an enemy is to be thought of according to the good there is in him; and that, if no other plan avails, gifts are to be offered to overcome his anger. "The giving of alms," it is said, "is a blessing to him who receives as well as to him who gives; but the receiver is inferior to the giver." Another meditation enjoins compassion to the poor; the third, a joyful spirit; the fourth, the impurity and unreality of the body; and the fifth and highest, that equanimity of mind when "all sentient beings are regarded alike, one is not loved more than another, nor hated more than another; towards all there is indifference."[1]

Just before his death Gautama called his disciples together, and solemnly enjoined them to practise the following means to virtue, out of pity for the world and for the good and happiness of men:—

(i.) The four earnest meditations—viz.:
- On the impurity of the body.
- On the evils which arise from sensation.
- On the impermanence of ideas.
- On the conditions of existence.

(ii.) The four great efforts—viz.:
- To prevent bad qualities from arising.
- To put away bad qualities which have arisen.
- To produce goodness not previously existing.
- To increase goodness when it does exist.

(iii.) The four means by which saintship is acquired—viz.:
- The will to acquire it.
- The necessary exertion.
- The necessary preparation of the heart.
- Investigation.

(iv.) Cultivation of the five moral powers of Faith, Energy, Recollection, Contemplation, and Intuition.

(v.) The seven kinds of Wisdom, which are
- Energy.
- Recollection.
- Contemplation.
- Investigation of Scripture.
- Joy.
- Repose.
- Serenity.

Suppression of the natural emotions, indifference to the ordinary experiences of life, is thus set forth as the highest ideal and the highest attainment of virtue —a view which, if it removes the sting of pain and sorrow, takes away at the same time that which to us constitutes the truest happiness, banishes joy and sympathy, and reduces life to a mechanism.

This passionless indifference is the main object of the Buddhist religious life, and before it is condemned as a serious flaw in an otherwise beautiful system, due weight should be given to those sad features of human life which, to the mind of Gautama, compelled the adoption of such an attitude as the only way of escape from pain. Logically, suicide might be thought the simplest means of effecting this escape. Buddhism, however, discourages suicide on the ground that duty requires the sentinel not to give up his post, and that the truly pious man has no desire to die. One of the Buddha's disciples is reported to have said: "I am like a servant awaiting the command of his master, ready to obey it, whatever it may be; I await the appointed time for the cessation of existence; I have no wish to live; I have no wish to die; desire is extinct."

A recognition of the fact that the system of caste is based upon distinctions

[1] Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism.*

which for the truly religious do not exist, and a broad spirit of toleration for those holding other creeds, are features in Buddhism not only worthy of high admiration from a moral point of view, but carrying with them consequences of great practical importance. The Buddhist king, Asoka, who lived in the third century before the Christian era, caused many inscriptions to be engraved on rocks and pillars in various parts of his empire, and these edicts expressly state his wish that those who differ from him in creed may also attain eternal salvation. The following epitome of religion contained in one of his inscriptions has probably never been surpassed for comprehensive terseness: "This is the true religious devotion, this the sum of religious instruction, that it should increase the mercy and charity, the truth and purity, the kindness and honesty, of the world."

We know that within a few centuries after Gautama's death Buddhism sadly degenerated, that its ethical purity became overlaid with belief in evil spirits, in hells surpassing in horror the imaginings of Dante, and that the machine-made devotions of which the "praying-wheels" of Tibet are an example superseded the manly spirit of self-control. In the time of Asoka, however, Buddhism was still comparatively pure. Rhys Davids, referring to these most valuable inscriptions, says: "We hear nothing of metaphysical beings or hypothetical deities, nothing of ritual, or ceremonies, or charms; the edicts are full of a lofty spirit of tolerance and righteousness...... Obedience to parents; kindness to children and friends; mercy towards the brute creation; indulgence to inferiors; reverence towards Brahmins and members of the order; suppression of anger, passion, cruelty, or extravagance; generosity, and tolerance, and charity—such are the lessons which the 'kindly king, the delight of the gods,' inculcates on all his subjects."[1] Asoka was a

[1] *Buddhism*, pp. 223-4.

missionary king; he sent embassies to the Greeks, from whom he claimed to have won a victory, "not by the sword, but by religion." The edicts also state that he established "hospitals for man and beast, planted medicinal plants and fruit-bearing trees where such did not naturally grow, and dug wells and planted trees on the roadsides for the use of man and beasts," and appointed ministers to see to the right treatment of subject races.[1] The government of this Buddhist emperor is stated in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to have been the most enlightened and philanthropic that India has ever known.

A distinguishing feature of Buddhism is its tenderness to animal life. Observing the cruel slaughter involved in the temple sacrifices, Gautama is reported to have said:—

> Ignorance only can make these men prepare festivals and vast meetings for sacrifices. Far better to revere the truth than try to appease the gods by the shedding of blood.
>
> What love can a man possess who believes that the destruction of life will atone for evil deeds? Can a new wrong expiate old wrongs? And can the slaughter of an innocent victim take away the sins of mankind? This is practising religion by the neglect of moral conduct.
>
> Purify your hearts and cease to kill; that is true religion.[2]

The following sentences closely resemble some of the teachings of Paul, the Christian Apostle:—

> Be like unto brothers; one in love, one in holiness, and one in your zeal for the truth.
>
> Spread the truth and preach the doctrine in all quarters of the world, so that in the end all living creatures will be citizens of the kingdom of righteousness.[3]

Moral and intellectual elevation unite in the texts which declare that

> A man that dwells in lonely woods and yet covets worldly vanities is a worldling, while the man in worldly garments may let his heart soar high to heavenly thoughts.[4]
>
> Happy is he who has overcome all selfishness; happy is he who has attained peace; happy is he who has found the truth.

[1] *Buddhism*, pp. 228-9.
[2] Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 26-7.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 43. [4] *Ibid*, p. 46.

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The truth is noble and sweet; the truth can deliver you from evil. There is no saviour in the world except the truth.[1]

Personal effort and self-reliance are encouraged :—

Whatever men do, whether they remain in the world as artisans, merchants, and officers of the king, or retire from the world and devote themselves to a life of religious meditation, let them put their whole heart into their task; let them be diligent and energetic; and if they are like the lotus, which, although it grows in the water, yet remains untouched by the water, if they struggle in life without cherishing envy or hatred, if they live in the world not a life of self, but a life of truth, then surely joy, peace, and bliss will dwell in their minds.[2]

Since it is impossible to escape the result of our deeds, let us practise good works.

Let us inspect our thoughts that we do no evil, for as we sow so shall we reap.[3]

By oneself evil is done; by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone; by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself; no one can purify another.[4]

If a man hold himself dear, let him watch himself carefully; let each man direct himself first to what is proper, then let him teach others. ......Self is the lord of self; who else could be the lord? (*Dhammapada.*)

Do not follow the evil law. Do not live on in thoughtlessness. Do not follow false doctrine. Be not a friend of the world. Rouse thyself; do not be idle. Follow the law of virtue. Do not follow that of sin......He whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds brightens up this world like the moon when freed from clouds......Beware of bodily anger, of the anger of the tongue, of the anger of the mind. Leave the sins of the mind and practise virtue with thy mind. (*Ibid.*)

Make thyself an island; work hard; be wise. Let a wise man blow off the impurities of himself as a smith blows off the impurities of silver —one by one, little by little, and from time to time......There is no fire like passion; there is no shark like hatred; there is no snare like folly: there is no torrent like greed. (*Ibid.*)

Another passage from this volume conveys the same idea as one of the parables of Jesus :—

"Here I shall dwell in the rain, here in winter and summer." Thus the fool meditates, and does not think of death. Death comes and carries off that man, honoured for his children and flocks, his mind distracted, as a flood carries off a sleeping village.

[1] Cârus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 42.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 62. [3] *Ibid*, p. 74. [4] *Ibid* p. 111.

The book called the *Mahâvagga* contains a few excellent precepts :—

Do not ask about descent, but ask about conduct.

Whoever, being innocent, endures reproach, blows, and bonds, the man who is strong in his endurance, him I call a Brahmana......The man who has a profound understanding, who is wise, who knows the true way and the wrong way, who has attained the highest good, him I call a Brahmana. The man who is stainless, like the moon, pure, serene, and undisturbed, who has destroyed joy, him I call a Brahmana.

From the *Book of the Great Decease* we gather one or two ethical blossoms :—

Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to anyone but yourselves.

Work out your salvation with diligence.
To him who gives shall virtue be increased.
In him who curbs himself no anger can arise.
The righteous man cast off all sinfulness,
And by the rooting out of lust and bitterness
And all delusion doth to Nirvana reach.

The following passages are from the *Dhammapada*, one of the best-known canonical books of the Buddhists :—

Pleasant is virtue lasting to old age; pleasant is a faith firmly rooted; pleasant is contentment with intelligence; pleasant is avoiding of sins.

They who see sin where there is no sin, and see no sin where there is sin, such men, embracing false doctrines, enter the evil path.

Good people shine from afar, like the snowy mountains; bad people are not seen, like arrows shot by night.

Whoever exalts himself and despises others, being men, by his pride let one know him as an outcast. (*Uragavagga*, ch. vii.)

Uneasy go the small waters, silent goes the vast ocean. What is deficient, that makes a noise; what is full, that is calm; the fool is like a half-filled water-pot, the wise is like a full pool. (*Mahavagga*, ch. xi.)

Those whose wishes are their motives, those who are linked to the pleasures of the world, they are difficult to liberate, for they cannot be liberated by others. (*Atthakavagga*, ch. ii.)

As a drop of water does not stick to a lotus, so a disciple does not cling to anything that is seen or heard or thought. (*Ibid*, ch. vi.)

Free as the air is the life of him who has renounced all worldly things. (*Tevigga Sutta*, ch. i.)

Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard—and that without difficulty—in all the four directions, even so, of all things that have

shape or life, there is not one that the enlightened man passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free and deep-felt love and pity, sympathy and equanimity. (*Ibid*, ch. iii.)

The various Suttas or scriptures of the Buddhists contain a vast number of exhortations and aids to the virtuous life, many of the highest ethical value, particularly as they dwell with great persistence on that need of personal effort and self-culture which the Christian is systematically taught to under-value, many others dealing with customs of a ceremonial and local character. Stripped of a few of those repetitions which were doubtless intended as helps to the memory, the following is a noble passage :—

If a man should desire that he should be victorious over spiritual danger and dismay, that neither danger nor dismay should ever overcome him; should desire to comprehend by his own heart the hearts of other beings and of other men; to discern the passionate mind to be passionate and the calm mind calm; the angry mind to be angry and the peaceable mind peaceable; the deluded mind to be deluded and the wise mind wise; the concentrated thoughts to be concentrated and the scattered to be scattered; the lofty mind to be lofty and the narrow mind narrow; the sublime thoughts to be sublime and the mean to be mean; the steadfast mind to he steadfast and the wavering to be wavering; the free mind to be free and the enslaved mind to be enslaved—let him then fulfil all righteousness; let him be devoted to that quietude of heart which springs from within; let him not drive back the ecstasy of contemplation: let him look through things; let him be much alone. (*Akankheyya Sutta*, sec. viii.)

Another of these scriptures defines as follows the ten forms of bondage or delusion which man has to overcome in his efforts towards moral purity :—

The delusion of self; doubt; reliance on the efficacy of rites and ceremonies; the bodily lusts or passions; hatred and ill-feeling; desire for a future life in the worlds of form; desire for a future life in the formless worlds; pride; self-righteousness; ignorance.

The second, third, and fifth of these are stated by Professor Rhys Davids to be "in effect but a new way of stating the fundamental Buddhist doctrine that good must be pursued without any ulterior motive; and that that man is not spiritually free in whom there is still the least hankering after any future life beyond the grave." (Introduction to *Ketokhila Sutta; Sacred Books of the East*, vol. ii.)

The needless verbal repetitions of the next extract have been expunged :—

A disciple wisely reflecting, when there has sprung up within him a lustful thought that he endureth not, he puts it away, he destroys it, he makes it not to be; when there has sprung up within him an angry thought, a malicious thought, some sinful, wrong disposition that he endureth not, he puts it away, he destroys it, he makes it not to be......He cultivates that part of the higher wisdom called Mindfulness, that called Search after Truth, that called Energy, that called Joy, that called Peace, that called Earnest Contemplation, that called Equanimity, each dependent on seclusion, dependent on passionlessness, dependent on the utter ecstasy of contemplation, resulting in the passing-off of thoughtlessness. (*Sabbâsava-Sutta.*)

The Buddhist conception of sin is not lacking in earnestness, though without the vivid intensity of feeling which prompted the anguished cry of Paul :—

An evil deed is better left undone, for a man will repent of it afterwards; a good deed is better done, for having done it one will not repent.

If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

If a man commits a sin, let him not do it again; let him not delight in sin; pain is the outcome of evil. If a man does what is good, let him do it again; let him delight in it; happiness is the outcome of good.[1]

The following text recalls the impassioned words of the Hebrew Psalmist :—

The gift of religion exceeds all gifts; the sweetness of religion exceeds all sweetness; the delight in religion exceeds all delights.[2]

Again, we have a similarity to a well-known Christian text :—

A treasure that is laid up in a deep pit profits nothing, and may easily be lost. The real treasure that is laid up through charity and piety, temperance, self-control, or deeds of merit, is hid secure, and cannot pass away. It is never gained by despoiling or wronging others, and no thief can steal it. A man when he dies must leave the fleeting wealth of the world, but this treasure of virtuous acts he takes with him.[3]

[1] Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 113.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 116. [3] *Ibid*, p. 149.

The Buddhists themselves look upon the following verse as a solemn summary of their master's teaching:—

Not to commit any sin; to do good, and to purify one's mind: this is the teaching of all the awakened.[1]

A short dialogue concerning the gentler sex is not without a spice of amusement. Gautama was asked by his favourite disciple Ananda:—

How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to womankind?
Do not see them.
But if we should see them, what are we to do?
Abstain from speech.
But if they should speak to us, Lord, what what are we to do?
Keep wide awake.[2]

With respect to the soul, Buddhism denies its independent existence, and regards it as practically the sum of a man's deeds. "Only through ignorance and delusion," said the Enlightened One, "do men indulge in the dream that their souls are separate and self-existent entities."[3] The ego is destroyed by death; what survives is the *Karma*, the aggregate of acts and their results. According to Dr. Carus, Buddha "does not deny man's mentality, his spiritual constitution, the importance of his personality—in a word, his soul. But he does deny that mysterious ego-entity, a kind of soul-monad, which by some schools was supposed to reside behind or within man's bodily and psychical activity as a distinct being.......But while there is no ego-entity, the very being of man consists in his Karma, and his Karma remains untouched by death, and continues to live. Thus, by denying the existence of that which appears to be our soul, and for the destruction of which in death we tremble, Buddha actually opens (as he expresses it himself) the door of immortality to mankind; and here lies the cornerstone of his ethics, and also of the comfort as well as the enthusiasm which his religion imparts. Anyone who does not see the positive aspect of Buddhism will be unable to understand how it could exercise such a powerful influence upon millions and millions of people."[1]

It is only fair to add that, with regard to the nature of this "positive aspect of Buddhism," there appear to be considerable differences of opinion. The term "Nirvāna" is the central point of the discussion, some scholars holding that it means the extinction of evil desires in the present life; others holding that it means absolute annihilation. The latter view seems to fall in better with the essential Buddhist theory that existence is itself an evil. In section 53 of his *Gospel of Buddha*, Dr. Carus gives an interesting discussion between Gautama and a Brahmin priest on the subject of the continuance of personal identity, and probably most European readers would consider Buddha's teachings somewhat unconvincing. His object appears to be to crush and destroy the feeling of self. To our minds, this is fatal to all thought, energy, and progress. "Self" is not a thing to be crushed out of existence, but a thing to be rationally moulded and developed.

On this point Buddhism is not consistent. The simplest way to destroy the feeling of self would be to practise all that would lessen life, both social and individual. But the noble morality of Gautama distinctly promotes and increases the quantity of life. The fact that righteousness tends not to extinction of self, but to its orderly and happy development, does not seem to have occurred to the great founder of Buddhism. No Buddhist could deny that its remarkable tenderness to animals helps to prolong their lives, and the same principle applies to human life. Consideration for others, the refraining from acts which diminish their happiness, clearly tend to promote life, and not to

[1] Rev. T. S. Berry, *Christianity and Buddhism*, p. 106.
[2] *Book of the Great Decease*, ch. v.
[3] Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 132.

[1] Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, preface, pp. vi.–vii.

lessen either its quantity or its happiness.

It is equally difficult for the European reader to gather the precise meaning of the term "karma." The doctrine of karma is a development of the theory of the transmigration of souls, which formed a prominent part of the ancient Brahminism that Gautama partially reformed. According to Professor Rhys Davids, "this is the doctrine, that as soon as a sentient being (man, animal, or angel) dies a new being is produced in a more or less painful and material state of existence, according to the 'karma,' the desert or merit, of the being who had died."[1] "Buddhism is convinced that if a man reaps sorrow, disappointment, pain, he himself, and no other, must at some time have sown folly, error, sin; and, if not in this life, then in some former birth. Where, then, in the latter case, is the identity between him who sows and him who reaps? *In that which alone remains* when a man dies, and the constituent parts of the sentient being are dissolved; in the result, namely, of his action, speech, and thought, in his good or evil *karma* (literally his 'doing') which does not die."[2] We are familiar with the idea that all human activities produce their inevitable results, but we undoubtedly find great difficulty in understanding how the results of actions can be concentrated "in the formation of one new sentient being—new, that is, in its constituent parts, but the same in its essence, its being, its doing, its *karma*."[3] The true Buddhist saint, says the same author, "does not mar the purity of his self-denial by lusting after a positive happiness which he himself shall enjoy hereafter. His consciousness will cease to feel, but his virtue will live and work out its full effect in the decrease of the sum of the misery of sentient beings."[4]

Unsatisfactory though this theory may be to us, there is a certain truth underlying it. Gautama looked upon actions as being like seeds: "men were found, to some extent, to reap the consequences of their actions during their lifetime, but this takes place only in a limited and incomplete sense, during the existence to which the actions belong. At the close of a life many acts remain like seed sown, but not yet grown up. Hence the theory that when a man dies he leaves the sum-total of the acts of his life as a kind of complex seed, made up of good and bad elements, which, by his death, springs up into a fresh existence, the same, and yet not the same; in somewhat of the sense in which it might be said that ordinary seed which springs up is identical, and yet not identical, with that which is sown. Viewed in this light, the theory loses its apparent absurdity. It becomes, in fact, a mode of expressing partly what we understand by the law of heredity, which involves a transference of character, and a reproduction of the consequences of actions; and partly the law of retribution, that 'whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.'"[1] "The sum-total of the actions of an individual during his lifetime constitute the karma. When a man dies the elements of his being perish, but by the force of his karma a new set of elements instantly start into existence, and a new being appears in another world, who, though possessing a different form and different elements of being, is in reality identical with the man just passed away, because his karma is the same. It is the link that preserves the identity of a being through all the countless changes which he undergoes."[2]

This is a highly speculative and unverifiable doctrine. Plain and obvious though it may be to the Buddhist, to the European it seems as mist gilded by the morning sunshine. It is clear that the point on which proof is most needed—*i.e.*, the continuance of personal identity

[1] Professor T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 101.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 103. [3] *Ibid*, p. 104.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 104.

[1] Berry, *Christianity and Buddhism*, p. 77.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 76.

—is merely assumed. The theory is elucidated with great wealth of unconvincing illustration in *The Questions of King Milinda*, a work dating from the first century before the Christian era, and in which the philosophical aspect of Buddhism is discussed with marked ability.

In addition to the moral principles at which we have already glanced, Buddhism provides a brief code regulating the conduct of social relations in accordance with the dictates of natural ethics. As this code is comparatively short, we append it in full :—

1.—Parents and Children.

Parents should—

1. Restrain their children from vice.
2. Train them in virtue.
3. Have them taught arts and sciences.
4. Provide them with suitable wives or husbands.
5. Give them their inheritance.

The child should say—

1. I will support them who supported me.
2. I will perform family duties incumbent on them.
3. I will guard their property.
4. I will make myself worthy to be their heir.
5. When they are gone I will honour their memory.

2.—Pupils and Teachers.

The pupil should honour his teachers :—

1. By rising in their presence.
2. By ministering to them.
3. By obeying them.
4. By supplying their wants.
5. By attention to instruction.

The teacher should show his affection to his pupils :—

1. By training them in all that is good.
2. By teaching them to hold knowledge fast.
3. By instruction in science and lore.
4. By speaking well of them to their friends and companions.
5. By guarding them from danger.

3.—Husband and Wife.

The husband should cherish his wife :—

1. By treating her with respect.
2. By treating her with kindness.
3. By being faithful to her.
4. By causing her to be honoured by others.
5. By giving her suitable ornaments and clothes.

The wife should show her affection for her husband :—

1. She orders her household aright.
2. She is hospitable to kinsmen and friends.
3. She is a chaste wife.
4. She is a thrifty housekeeper.
5. She shows skill and diligence in all she has to do.

4.—Friends and Companions.

The honourable man should minister to his friends :—

1. By giving presents.
2. By courteous speech.
3. By promoting their interest.
4. By doing to them as he would be done by.
5. By sharing with them his prosperity.

They should show their attachment to him :—

1. By watching over him when he is off his guard.
2. By guarding his property when he is careless.
3. By offering to him a refuge in danger.
4. By adhering to him in misfortune.
5. By showing kindness to his family.

5.—Masters and Servants.

The master should provide for the welfare of his dependents :—

1. By apportioning work to them according to their strength.
2. By supplying suitable food and wages.
3. By tending them in sickness.
4. By sharing with them unusual delicacies.
5. By now and then granting them holidays.

They should show their attachment to him as follows :—

1. They rise before him.
2. They retire later to rest.
3. They are content with what is given them.
4. They work cheerfully and thoroughly.
5. They speak well of him.

6.—Laymen and those Devoted to Religion.

The honourable man ministers to mendicants and Brahmans :—

1. By affection in act.
2. By affection in words.
3. By affection in thoughts.
4. By giving them a ready welcome.
5. By supplying their temporal wants.

They should show their affection to him :—

1. By dissuading him from vice.
2. By exhorting him to virtue.
3. By feeling kindly towards him.
4. By instructing him in religion.
5. By clearing up his doubts.
6. By pointing the way to heaven.[1]

[1] Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, pp. 144-7.

Many of these rules evince a thoughtful consideration for others in comparative trifles which could spring only from very high moral conceptions, and which the robust individuality of the Western world is apt to ignore. Surely the mysterious East, that fertile mother of religions, has given us in Buddhism a true revelation, since it makes known to us the moral beauty and purity that lie in the deeps of human nature, needing no other divinity than that which abides in the human heart to awaken them into living glory.

It has now been made abundantly clear that the moral conceptions of Buddhism, although intermixed with a great deal of counsel which to us appears worthless, afford a valuable supplement to our own current ideas of righteousness, and comprise many ethical features at least equal and occasionally superior in practical value to anything which has been developed by the religious aspirations of Christian civilisation.

Though legend has played its part in the formation of the Buddhist faith, its ethical sweetness was in the main derived from Gautama himself. Probably no more beautiful, gentle, and spotless character has ever existed among the sons of men. Sir Edwin Arnold has said: "Discordant in frequent particulars, and sorely overlaid by corruptions, inventions, and misconceptions, the Buddhistical books yet agree in the one point of recording nothing—no single act or word—which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr."[1]

[1] *Light of Asia*, Preface, p. viii.

CONFUCIANISM AND TAOUISM

I.—Confucianism.

THE majority of us have but the vaguest ideas of who Confucius was, when he lived, and what he did. Yet we may glean many fragments of truth from this ancient Chinese teacher. He was one who, like Buddha, dismissed from thought all theories of a personal God, all expectations of the soul's immortality. Western writers often confidently assure us that without these two "essentials" of religion the moralist cannot hope to exert any permanent influence. Yet the remarkable veneration in which the great secular teachers of the East are to this day held by the larger half of mankind is proof that the strenuous claims of the secular life do in reality predominate over the unsubstantial visions of a possible future.

Confucius was born within a few years of Buddha in that sixth century before the Christian era which witnessed so mighty an awakening of religious thought and activity. China was then a collection of petty States, governed on a sort of feudal basis by kings or dukes, and generally at war with one another. Civilisation had made considerable progress, but the despotism and rapacity of the rulers and nobles hindered its diffusion. Justice was rare, moral claims were lost sight of, and neither social nor political stability existed. It was the aim of Confucius to revive the ancient usages, beliefs, and institutions which had rendered glorious the reigns of several of the early Chinese kings. The philosopher's experiences, however, were discouraging in the extreme. He wandered from one court to another, proffering his

services as adviser, minister, or magistrate, occasionally tasting the doubtful sweets of office, but more frequently neglected and unheeded—a voice crying in the wilderness. A few faithful disciples clung to him till the last, when, in poverty and sorrow, he died in the year 478 B.C.

Confucius had great faith in his own capabilities. He believed that he could regenerate a State in three years, but an ungrateful country never gave him the opportunity. He was above all a political moralist, who looked to the past as the golden age of China, and believed that a return to the simple virtues of their ancestors was all that was needed to make the people prosperous and happy. Their welfare was the object that governed all his endeavours; it was for the people that he thought, travelled, and laboured. His limited but intensely conscientious mind attached a disproportionate weight to the due performance of rites, though in defence of his attitude it must be borne in mind that in the case of a people who believe in ceremonies, and with difficulty grasp truths, outward forms are the only means by which ethical ideas can be conveyed. To Confucius observances were valuable as affording the best means of guaranteeing conduct.

The actual moral teaching of Confucius exhibits very little originality. His main literary work was the collecting and editing of the books on history, poetry, and morals, which had long existed in his time. These ancient books comprise :—

1. The *Yi-King*[1] (or Sacred Book of Changes).
2. The *Shu-King* (or Book of History).
3. The *Shi-King* (or Book of Poetry).
4. The *Li-Ki* (or Book of Rites).

The only work of which Confucius was the sole author was of an historical character, being a continuation of the Shu-King, and entitled *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Most of his ethical teaching was delivered by word of mouth, and this, by the care of his disciples, has been preserved in three small volumes, which, with a fourth, form what are known as the Four Classics or Sacred Books. They are respectively :—

1. The *Ta heŏ*, or Great Learning.
2. The *Chung yung*, or Doctrine of the Mean.
3. The *Lun yu*, or Confucian Analects.
4. The *Măng tsze*, or Works of Mencius, the most eminent of the followers of Confucius.

In spite of its limitations, the ethical quality of the work of Confucius is undoubtedly high. We find, of course, an excessive reverence for the past; filial piety is carried to a degree unknown to Western nations; and many of the rites enjoined appeared to us to be not merely superstitious, but obviously foolish. Yet the soul of his teaching is moral goodness, and this is so aided and broadened by the inculcation of right reason as to greatly increase its practical usefulness. From a passage in the *Shu King* it would appear that conceptions in which the claims of head and heart were happily united were known from a very early period, though, as this work was compiled by Confucius, we cannot be sure that the words in question are not his own. A minister of the great king Shun (who reigned more than 2,000 years B.C.), being asked what were the nine virtues, replied :—

> Affability combined with dignity; mildness combined with firmness; bluntness combined with respectfulness; aptness for government combined with reverence; docility combined with boldness; straightforwardness combined with gentleness; easiness combined with discrimination; vigour combined with sincerity; and valour combined with righteousness.[1]

This is far from being a simple classification of morals, and we may well feel the improbability that such a remote age could be in a position to represent each virtue as being a compound of other virtues; even if Confucius be the author

[1] The word "king" means "book."

[1] *Confucianism and Taouism*, Professor R. K. Douglas, p. 13.

of the passage, it must be admitted to indicate a comparatively advanced stage of both individual intelligence and social organisation.

Confucius held office as Minister of Crime in one of the small Chinese States, but not for a sufficiently long time to admit of his theories being fairly put into practice. He believed that, if given a free hand, he would "effect something considerable in twelve months, and in three years the government would be perfected," and crime virtually abolished. But jealousy, selfishness, and treachery undid his work. He held up too high a standard to suit the debauched tastes of the time. With a pride which did him credit, he gave up his post when a rival ruler sent eighty dancing girls as a present to his master in the hopes of destroying his influence. The trick was successful: the philosopher was no match for the dancers.

His reverence for forms and ceremonial, his scrupulous observance of the details of Chinese etiquette, did not blind him to the perception of the real meaning, the essentially practical nature, of right conduct. Nor did the stress laid on filial piety cause him to overlook the obligations on parents to bring up their children worthily. On one occasion, when a father brought an accusation against his son, Confucius cast both into prison, and, in reply to remonstrances, is said to have uttered the following homily:

> Am I to punish for a breach of filial piety one who has never been taught to be filially-minded? Is not he who neglects to teach his son his duties equally guilty with the son who fails in them? Crime is not inherent in human nature, and therefore the father in the family and the Government in the State are responsible for the crimes committed against filial piety and the public laws. If a king is careless about publishing laws, and then peremptorily punishes in accordance with the strict letter of them, he acts the part of a swindler; if he collects the taxes arbitrarily, without giving warning, he is guilty of oppression; and if he puts the people to death without having instructed them, he commits a cruelty.[1]

[1] *Confucianism*, Douglas, p. 34.

Confucius placed an excessive faith in human nature and in the influence of example. "What do you say," he was asked by a chief, "to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" "Sir," replied Confucius, "in carrying on your government why should you employ capital punishment at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good." Just as the nature of gold is hardness, and the nature of fire is heat, he held that the nature of man is benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness.[1] Everything around him gave the lie to this view, but he never relaxed his faith in human goodness.

Confucius was once asked if there was one word which might serve as a rule of practice for all one's life. With remarkable penetration he replied: "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others." He gave this aphorism a more positive form when he said:—

> In the way of the superior man there are four things, to none of which have I as yet attained—To serve my father as I would require my son to serve me; to serve my prince as I would require my minister to serve me; to serve my elder brother as I would require my younger brother to serve me; and to offer first to friends what one requires of them.[2]

It is worthy of notice that the virtues upon which Confucius lays most emphasis are, not merely outward observances, but some of the primary and most natural dictates of the human heart. Faithfulness he ranks as the foundation of conduct, and as necessary to truly virtuous behaviour as a boat is to a man wishing to cross a river. "Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles,"[3] said he. "I do not know how a man is to get on without faithfulness."[4] The earnestness with which he insisted over and over again on this requirement shows that his system was not so devoid

[1] Douglas, p. 70.
[2] *Chung Yung*, xiii. 4, Douglas, p. 103.
[3] *Lun Yu*, ix. 24, *ibid*, p. 114.
[4] *Li Ki*, ii. 22, *ibid*.

of the spiritual element as is often supposed.

Confucianism is a purely secular system, and its lack of transcendental motives, while probably rendering it better adapted to the requirements of the Chinese race, will doubtless appear to the European to stamp it as unlikely to originate and foster the highest type of character. Prudential motives, the avoidance of extremes, the cultivation of the "mean" that lies between what we understand by sin on the one hand and holiness on the other—in fact, what might be termed a "split-the-difference" kind of morality—differentiates Confucianism from other ethical systems. In spite, however, of this prevailing characteristic, much of its ethical teaching is pure, wise, and noble, sometimes remarkable for its shrewd and penetrating observation. The sacred books of China make no claim to be considered inspired documents. Its wisdom is content to own its human origin, and makes no vain efforts to scale the heights of the divine.

From the *Shu King*, or Book of Historical Documents, a few sheaves of thought may be gleaned, such as these. Referring to methods of Government, Yü, a great sage of remote antiquity, gave to a prince the following counsel :—

Be cautious. Do not fail to observe the laws and ordinances. Do not find your enjoyment in idleness. Do not go to excess in pleasure. In your employment of men of worth, let none come between you and them. Put away evil without hesitation. Do not carry out plans of the wisdom of which you have doubts. Study that all your purposes may be with the light of reason. Do not go against what is right to get the praise of the people. Do not oppose the people's wishes to follow your own desires. (*Sacred Books of China*, vol. i., p. 47.)

As early as the eighteenth century B.C. a minister is recorded to have uttered this enlightened sentiment :—

There is no invariable model of virtue ; a supreme regard to what is good gives the model of it. There is no invariable characteristic of what is good that is to be supremely regarded ; it is found where there is a conformity to the uniform conscience. (*Ibid*, p. 102.)

Early and late, never be but earnest. If you do not attend jealously to your small actions, the result will be to affect your virtue in great matters. (*Ibid*, p. 151.)

A small man thinks that small acts of goodness are of no benefit, and does not do them ; and that small deeds of evil do no harm, and does not abstain from them. (*Yi King*, Appendix, iii. 38.)

Virtue small and office high ; wisdom small and plans great ; strength small and burden heavy : where such conditions exist, it is seldom that they do not end in evil. (*Ibid*, p. 40.)

Pride should not be allowed to grow ; the desires should not be indulged ; the will should not be gratified to the full ; pleasure should not be carried to excess. (*Li Ki*, p. 62.)

Virtue, according to the Chinese classics, comprises five leading principles, or qualities, which are the constituents of human nature—viz., Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Knowledge, and Fidelity. Of these the first is the fundamental quality; Mencius, the greatest of the disciples of Confucius, going so far as to declare that "Benevolence is Man." In the writings of Kwang-Tze, the chief disciple of Lao-Tze, Confucius is recorded to have defined benevolence as "to be in one's inmost heart in kindly sympathy with all things ; to love all men ; and to allow no selfish thoughts."

The foundation of all virtue, the stem out of which all moral teaching branches, is Filial Piety. This is the corner-stone of Chinese ethics and politics. A whole volume, called the *Hsiâo King*, or Classic of Filial Piety, is devoted to the exposition and inculcation of this virtue, and some specimens of its teaching may be of interest :—

Our bodies are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety. When we have established our character by the practice of the filial course, so as to make our names famous in future ages, and thereby glorify our parents—this is the end of filial piety. It commences with the service of parents ; it proceeds to the service of the ruler ; it is completed by the establishment of the character. (Chap. i.)

In his general conduct to his parents the son manifests the utmost reverence ; in his nourishing of them his endeavour is to give them the utmost pleasure ; when they are ill he feels the greatest anxiety ; in mourning for their death he

exhibits every demonstration of grief; in sacrificing to them he displays the utmost solemnity. (*Ibid*, chap. x.)

The duty of filial piety does not, however, extend to implicit obedience in everything:—

When a case of unrighteous conduct is concerned, a son must by no means keep from remonstrating with his father, nor a minister from remonstrating with his ruler. Since remonstrance is required in the case of unrighteous conduct, how can simple obedience to the orders of a father be accounted filial piety? (*Ibid*, chap. xv.)

This implies that the personal duties dictated by family affection must be held subordinate to the demands of righteousness as established by the community. Probably the same idea underlies the theory that a king is the father of his people, and so entitled to their filial reverence.

The conception which Confucius taught of the nature and capacities of man is astonishingly high, when we consider the circumstances of the times in which it was framed. The following summary of his philosophy is taken from Professor Douglas's admirable little work, from which most of our quotations in this section are made:—

Man, he taught, is master of his own destiny, and not only so, but he is the equal of heaven and earth, and as such is able to influence the course of nature. By complete sincerity he is able to give its full development to his nature. Having done this, he is able to do the same to the nature of other men. Having given its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Having given their full development to the nature of animals and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of heaven and earth. Having assisted the transforming and nourishing powers of heaven and earth, he may with heaven and earth form a trinity. Then he becomes the equal of heaven and earth; and when this stage is reached universal order will prevail, and all things are nourished and perfected. Such is the position which the ideal man occupies in the universe. And the ideal man is endowed by heaven with an ideal nature. All men are born good, and all are alike possessed by heaven-sent qualities which enable them to acquire the ideal nature. That which a man inherits is goodness, and when that is perfected it becomes his nature.[1]

It is not very easy to extract a definite meaning from such phrases as "the full development of nature" and "transforming and nourishing powers"; but the idea that men are born good is a nobler and more hopeful belief than the idea that men are born evil.

As already stated, Confucius laid great stress on benevolence; not merely in the form of almsgiving, but as a spirit governing all the relations of life. The benevolence of the "superior man" is not limited to his own relatives and connections, but extends to the relations between the people and their rulers. The whole human race should be recipients of it; in a word, as Confucius puts it, benevolence is to love all men. It should originate in knowledge and regulation of one's own nature, and should be guided by a sense of justice. Confucius often summarised his ideas of the chief moral qualities in the phrase, "the virtue of humanity," which he thus defined: "He who is able to accomplish five things on earth is endowed with the virtue of humanity: respect for himself and for others, generosity, fidelity or sincerity, diligence in doing good, and love of all men." And, further, he says: "Have sufficient self-control, even to judge of others in comparison with yourself, and to act towards them as you would wish them to act to you. This is what one may call the 'doctrine of humanity,' and there is nothing beyond this."[2]

Justice was a virtue on which the philosopher laid great emphasis:—

The superior man, in all the circumstances of life, is exempt from prejudice and stubbornness. Justice alone is his guide. He employs all his power to do that which is just and proper, and for the good of mankind.[3]

He thus defines and illustrates the nature of the "superior man":—

The superior man is he who has equal good-

[1] *Confucianism*, pp. 68, 69.
[2] *Confucius*, M. Deshumbert, p. 17.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 18.

will towards all, and who is without egotism and prejudice.

The common man is he who has only feelings of egotism, and is without a disposition kindly to all men.

The superior man has equanimity and tranquillity of soul. The common man experiences continually trouble and anxiety.

The superior man raises himself continually in intelligence and in power of judgment; the man without merit descends continually into further ignorance and vice.

The superior man is influenced by a sense of justice; the common man by the love of gain.

The superior man places equity and justice above all else.[1]

So far as Confucianism has an ideal, it finds expression in the "superior man," who is, or should be, an embodiment of all the virtues:—

He speaks, having thought whether the words should be spoken; he acts, having thought whether his actions are sure to give pleasure. His virtue and righteousness are such as will be honoured; what he initiates and does is fit to be imitated; his deportment is worthy of contemplation; his movements, in advancing or retiring, are all according to the proper rule. In this way does he present himself to the people, who both revere and love him, imitate, and become like him. (*Ibid*, ch. 9.)

The superior man, rather than have his emoluments superior to his worth, will have his worth superior to his emoluments. (*Lî Kî*, book 27.)

The superior man does not take all the profit that he might do, but leaves some for the people. (*Ibid.*)

The virtue referred to in the last extract is *not* guaranteed to be a characteristic of the Chinese official of the present day.

Another description of the "superior man" is one of the most eloquent in the Chinese scriptures, and is believed to have been written of Confucius himself:—

All-embracing is he and vast like heaven. Deep and active as a fountain, he is like an abyss......Wherever ships and carriages reach; wherever the strength of man penetrates; wherever the heavens overshadow and the earth sustains; wherever the sun and moon shine; wherever frosts and dews fall; all who have blood and breath unfeignedly honour and love him. (*Ibid*, ch. 28.)

The superior man internally examines his heart, that there may be nothing wrong there, and no occasion for dissatisfaction with himself. (*Ibid.*)

When the superior man puts on the dress of his rank he sets it off by the demeanour of the superior man. That demeanour he sets off with the language of a superior man; and that language he makes good by the virtues of the superior man. Hence the superior man is ashamed to wear the robes and not have the demeanour; ashamed to have the demeanour and not the style of speech; ashamed to have the style of speech and not the virtues; ashamed to have the virtues and not the conduct proper to them. (*Ibid*, book 29.)

The superior man does not confine himself to praising men with his words; when he asks about men who are suffering from cold he clothes them; or men who are suffering from want he feeds them. (*Ibid.*)

Dissatisfaction and calamity will come to him whose lip-kindness is not followed by the corresponding deeds. (*Ibid.*)

The superior man's words have respect to his practice, and his practice has respect to his words. Is not the superior man characterised by a perfect sincerity? (*Ibid*, 28.)

The love of virtue should be like the love of beauty—from an inward constraint. (*Ibid.*)

To be fond of learning is near to wisdom; to practise with vigour is near to benevolence; to know to be ashamed is near to virtue. He who knows these three things knows how to cultivate his own character. (*Ibid.*)

Where there is a deep and compassionate sympathy in the heart we have humanity evidenced in the love of others. (*Lî Kî*, book 29.)

The way to become a "superior man" is to set one's affections on what is right, to love learning, which is the source of knowledge and virtue, with which nothing else can be compared. When righteousness is pursued with sincerity and a mind free from self-deception the heart becomes rectified.

The next step is the "cultivation of the person," by which is meant the uplifting of the character and influence by personal effort.

Up to this stage the individual has been busy only with his own improvement; but the cultivation of the person influences primarily those around him, and ultimately the whole empire. Everyone, therefore, should carefully cultivate his person, having a due regard for others besides himself......Each man must guard his words and watch his conduct. He must fly all that is base and disquieting, and must take benevolence as his dwelling-place, righteousness as his road, propriety as his garment, wisdom as his lamp, and faithfulness as his charm. Dignity, reverence, loyalty, and faithfulness make up the qualities of a cultivated man. His dignity

[1] *Confucius*, M. Deshumbert, p. 22.

separates him from the crowd; being reverent, he is beloved; being loyal, he is submitted to; and being faithful, he is trusted.[1]

Courtesy is near to propriety; economy is near to humanity; good faith is near to the truth of things.[2]

The emphasis laid by Confucius upon "propriety" may appear to indicate little more than a tame and conventional standard of respectability, but it should be remembered that the term covers a wider and higher range of conduct than is the case among ourselves. In our view, reference to any external standard of morals is hardly calculated to strengthen the spirit of love in which natural duties should be performed, yet it is an undoubted fact that the influence of Confucius has largely assisted in making family piety and social loyalty the dominant factors in Chinese life, and, on the whole, with beneficial results.

Though he had an unwavering confidence in the truth of his teaching, Confucius was remarkable for his personal humility, and for his modest estimate of his own powers and attainments. It is claimed that he was absolutely free from prejudice, obstinacy, egotism, and self-conceit. Here is his opinion of himself:—

If I think of a man who unites saintliness to the virtue of humanity, how can I dare to compare myself with him! I only know that I strive to practise these virtues without being disheartened, and to teach them to others without being discouraged or despondent.[3]

A strictly conscientious self-estimate was frequently enjoined by Confucius:—

"When you see a wise man," said he, "think whether you have the same virtues as he. When you see a wicked man, look to yourself, and examine attentively your own conduct."

If we are three who travel together, I shall certainly find two teachers (in my companions). I shall choose the good man to imitate, and use the wicked man to correct myself.[4]

Referring to the opinion of Lao-Tze, that kindness should be extended to the good and to the wicked without distinction, Confucius was once asked: "What should one think of a man who returns kindness for injuries?" To this the philosopher replied: "If one acts thus, how can one repay kindness itself? One must repay hatred and injuries by equity; and kindness by kindness."[1] The passage clearly shows that the idea embodied in a familiar Christian rule was well known to these ancient Chinese moralists; whether such a conception or that of Confucius is the wiser and loftier we need not here attempt to determine.

A high sentiment of honour appears in the next passage:—

In your dealings with men, be true and faithful to your engagements! Let your words be sincere and true! Let your acts be always honourable and worthy! Even if you were in the land of barbarians of the south or of the north, your conduct should be faultless.[2]

Without despising wealth, since he realised its power for good, Confucius uttered a caution which may well be borne in mind during periods when the acquisition of riches is in danger of becoming a universal passion:—

Riches and honour are the desires of men. If one cannot obtain them by honest and fair means, they must be renounced. Poverty and humble positions are what men hate and despise. If one cannot escape these by honest and fair means, one must submit to them.[3]

And the following advice to rulers is excellent:—

A prince should select his ministers according to the promptings of his conscience, having always the public good in view. He must conform to the great law of duty; and this great law of duty must be sought for in the "virtue of humanity," which is the source of love for all men. This is why even a prince cannot dispense with the duty of correcting and perfecting himself.[4]

In this great duty of moral and intellectual self-culture, which Confucius so frequently emphasised, he assumed man's ability to act without the stimulus of any external spiritual agency; in other words, he practically dispensed with the

[1] *Douglas*, p. 101. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Confucius*, M. Deshumbert, p. 22.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 19.

[1] *Confucius*, M. Deshumbert, p. 23.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 19. [3] *Ibid*, p. 21. [4] *Ibid*, p. 20.

aid of religious beliefs. It is true he did not deny the existence of a spiritual world, of a heaven, or a Supreme Being. Sacrifices to heaven and to ancestral spirits were part of his system. But he was very reticent on such subjects, considering them obscure and unprofitable, and tending to superstition. His nature was certainly not devoid of the religious element, but a keen perception of the limitations of human knowledge caused it to recede into the background; in fact, Confucius was one who in the present day would be termed an Agnostic; and this naturally forms a recommendation in the eyes of that increasing number of persons who are discovering that every theological doctrine ends in a *cul de sac.* When asked what was death, he pertinently replied: "When one does not yet know what life is, how should one know what death is?"[1] The present life, he held, should be the object of our study. Whence man came, whither he was going, Confucius cared but little; his aim was to promote man's happiness while he was actually here.

The large share which the intellect has in regulating the dictates of the heart is indicated in the words: "Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous."[2] The sentence, "When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it—this is knowledge,"[3] does not define the limitations of knowledge, but it embodies the spirit which is willing to recognise the existence of a barrier to complete enlightenment, and so makes it less likely that false ideas will be accepted as true.

Confucius "sought an all-pervading unity, in which the relations of life should be all strictly maintained, in which honour should be paid to those to whom it was due, and in which the stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or

[1] *Confucius*, M. Deshumbert, p. 24.
[2] *Lun Yu,* ii., 25, Douglas, p. 94.
[3] Douglas, p. 95.

joy should be kept within their proper limits. Self was to be subdued, and the indulgence of the appetites was to be kept under control. Gravity, generosity, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness were to be cultivated, and to the more sterling qualities of the mind should be added the attraction of accomplishments. For when the solid qualities are in excess of the accomplishments we have rusticity, and when the accomplishments are in excess of the solid qualities we have the manners of a clerk. It is only when the two are equally blended that we have a man of complete virtue."[1] This wise compromise between extremes was a salient feature of the philosophy of Confucius. He aimed at securing an all-round development of nature; he dreaded the development of one quality at the expense of the rest; it was essential to preserve the balance between the whole of our faculties.

Confucius never claimed to originate fresh doctrines; he merely recalled the people to truths which had been formerly known and practised. In his own words, he was "a transmitter, and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients." Nor did he claim to have reached his own ideal. Imbued with a genuine love of learning, and vigorously advocating the most persevering study, he admitted his own deficiency of knowledge. "I am not virtuous enough," he said, "to be free from anxieties; not wise enough to be free from perplexities; and not bold enough to be free from fear."[2] Lacking the servility of the courtier and the practical knowledge of the man of the world, "he never strove to advance himself beyond his proper position, nor to make use of his influence to magnify himself in the eyes of his fellow men."[3]

Considering that the philosopher dwelt so largely on the milder virtues, it is a little surprising to read that he attached importance to the virtue of courage. Perhaps it is still more remarkable that

[1] Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 147.
[2] *Lun Yu*, xiv. 30, Douglas, p. 147. [3] *Ibid.*

in a remote and partially civilised age he should perceive that moral courage is of a higher order than physical. This appears to be the purport of a passage in the Confucian Analects, to the effect that the truly brave man must be righteous and benevolent; he must act up to what he believes to be right, and must be calm in the face of adversity.[1] Concerning courage as a social virtue, we adduce the following passage from Professor Douglas's *Confucianism*:—

The prominence given by Confucius to valour as a component part of virtue is evidence of the position he holds rather as a politician than as a moral philosopher. His leading idea was the preservation of the State. To this all his teachings tend, and those qualities, therefore, which might be expected to lead to this end are naturally estimated by him at a high value. Not that his idea of valour was confined only to mere physical courage. On the contrary, he laid great stress on the moral courage which enables a man to throw aside his faults and failings, and to declare plainly, in the face of temptations and ridicule, that he is seeking after righteousness. "To go on the water and face dragons," said he, "is the valour of the fisherman; to hunt on land and not avoid rhinoceroses and tigers is the valour of the huntsman; to face encounters with deadly weapons, and to regard death as life, is the valour of the soldier; but to recognise that poverty comes by the ordinance of heaven, and that there is a tide in the affairs of men, and in the face of difficulty not to fear, is the valour of the sage."[2]

It is greatly to the honour of Confucius that he should have had so deep a concern for the welfare of the people in general. Being on one occasion asked what should be done for the people, he replied, "Enrich them"; and when asked what more should be done, he answered, "Teach them." In the *Shu-King*, edited by him, is recorded a saying which, if really uttered at a period of such vast antiquity, is proof of astonishing moral insight. "No virtue," said the Emperor Kuh (2435 B.C.), "is higher than to love all men, and there is no loftier aim in government than to profit all men."[3]

Confucius did not elaborate any regular system of ethics. As occasion arose he uttered a great number of maxims of a moral and political nature, most of which were probably written down at the time by the disciples who accompanied him in his wanderings. Many of these cannot be taken as of universal obligation, being tinged by his excessive reverence for antiquity, as well as for the external forms of conduct, and having a limited application to Chinese ideas alone. But, as we have seen, there remains a considerable body of teaching, of which the wisdom, penetration, and wholesome common sense commend themselves to European and Chinaman alike. The admiration of his own countrymen is evidently as sincere as it has proved enduring; indeed, the extraordinary reverence in which the sage is held has been a main factor in the political stability of the nation.

It may prove interesting to append the following set of sixteen maxims, which were issued to his people by an Emperor of China towards the end of the seventeenth century, as a short compendium of the Confucian doctrines:—

1. Esteem most highly filial piety and brotherly submission, in order to give due prominence to the social relations.
2. Behave with generosity to the branches of your kindred, in order to illustrate harmony and benignity.
3. Cultivate peace and concord in your neighbourhoods, in order to prevent quarrels and litigations.
4. Recognise the importance of husbandry and the culture of the mulberry-tree, in order to ensure a sufficiency of clothing and food.
5. Show that you prize moderation and economy, in order to prevent the lavish waste of your means.
6. Make much of the colleges and seminaries, in order to make correct the practice of the scholars.
7. Discountenance and banish strange doctrines, in order to exalt the correct doctrine.
8. Describe and explain the laws, in order to warn the ignorant and obstinate.
9. Exhibit clearly propriety and yielding courtesy, in order to make manners and customs good.
10. Labour diligently at your proper callings, in order to give settlement to the aims of the people.
11. Instruct sons and younger brothers, in

[1] *Confucianism*, p. 107.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 106. [3] *Ibid*, p. 132.

order to prevent them from doing what is wrong.

12. Put a stop to false accusations, in order to protect the honest and the good.

13. Warn against sheltering deserters, in order to avoid being involved in their punishments.

14. Promptly and fully pay your taxes, in order to avoid the urgent requisition of your quota.

15. Combine in hundreds and tithings, in order to put an end to thefts and robbery.

16. Study to remove resentments and angry feelings, in order to show the importance due to the person and life.

Though most of these injunctions are of obvious practical value (the prudential tone of No. 14 is particularly noticeable from an official point of view), they do not seem to embody all that is best in the Confucian ethics; the fine definition of benevolence, for instance, being omitted. Still, it is worth pointing out that, though a motive for good conduct is in each case referred to, it is never based upon the selfish hope of ultimate reward to the individual.

II.—Taouism.

Taouism, one of the popular religions of China, was founded by a sturdy and independent teacher named Lao-Tze, who, during the letter part of his life, was contemporary with Confucius. The exact date of his death is unknown; but, as he was born in 604 B.C., half a century earlier than the rival philosopher, he must have lived to a great age, since Confucius is reported to have been fifty-one years old on the occasion of their first interview. And this was while Lao-Tze held a State appointment, which he afterwards gave up, passing then, for an indefinite time, a wandering and secluded life.

Lao-Tze was a man of powerful intellect and rugged manners; and, having retired into solitude out of disgust with the ways of the world, he looked with a certain contemptuous scorn on the efforts of Confucius to make straight the crooked paths. On their meeting at the Court of the Emperor Chow, Confucius sought the elder's sympathy in his failure to regenerate society, but met with a needlessly sharp rebuff. While there were points of contact in the doctrines of the two men, each holding that human nature is essentially good, evil being the result of untoward circumstances acting on a weak but not vicious nature, the teaching of Lao-Tze was at once more spiritual in its aspirations and more profound in its philosophy; it appealed to the heart rather than enjoined ceremonies. This peculiarity was probably due to the source from which his conceptions were originally drawn. The origin of the ethic of Confucius is to be found in the ancient writings of his own country; Lao-Tze drew his inspiration from the Indian philosophers who preceded the rise of Buddhism. His entire system, both in conception and in details, is distinctly Brahminical, says Mr. Douglas. Instead of recommending ritual, he advocated a return to the primitive simplicity of the times when ceremonies and observances had not been instituted. Although a recluse, he was actuated by the same sympathy for his fellow creatures and the same desire for their social and political improvement as animated Confucius, and his teaching constantly kept this end in view. To the formalists Lao-Tze says:—

> Abandon your wisdom, and cast away your prudence, and the people will be a hundredfold more happy. Renounce your philanthropy and throw aside your justice, and the people will return to filial piety and fatherly compassion. Renounce your cleverness and forego your gains, and thieves will disappear.......And appear in your own unadorned simplicity, preserve your purity, curb your selfishness, and curtail your ambitious desires.[1]

We find in Lao-Tze a far more explicit recognition than in Confucius of a spiritual power superior to man:—

> I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize—namely, compassion, economy, and humility. Being compassionate, I can be brave; being economical, I can be liberal; and being humble, I can become the chief of men. But in the present day men give up compassion, and

[1] *Taou Tih-King*, c. xix.; Douglas, *Confucianism and Taouism*, p. 193.

cultivate only courage; they give up economy, and aim only at liberality; they give up the last place, and seek only the first; it is their death. Compassion is that which is victorious in the attack and secure in the defence. When Heaven would save a man it encircles him with compassion."[1]

Some of the political maxims of Lao-Tze indicate an advanced degree of enlightenment. "Everything for the people, and everything by the people,"[2] the substance of the modern democratic ideal, is part of his system. "A nation is a growth, not a manufacture,"[3] is a saying which embodies a profound truth. He uttered emphatic protests against war and violence, and for analogous reasons opposed capital punishment. He held, moreover, that if a State were well governed the necessity for capital, or, indeed, any other punishment, could not arise.

If the people could be taught to love simplicity and purity, crime would cease to exist. But it is the striving after wealth, learning, and position which disorders men's minds, rouses their passions, and causes them to think lightly of death.......Men who live only for amusement, or for the indulgence of their selfish caprices, are willing enough to resign their being when their appetites fail them, from whatever cause, and when their ambitious schemes fall to the ground. And when once a people has reached this stage of recklessness no punishment will be effectual to prevent their rushing into sin. "When the people do not fear death, to what purpose is death still used to overcome them?" But if there be a man worthy of death, there is always the "Great Executioner," in whose hands are the issues of life and death....... "Now, for any man to act the executioner's part is to hew out the Great Architect's work for him. And he who undertakes to hew for the Great Architect rarely fails to cut his hands."[4]

This seems to imply a belief in an over-ruling Providence, but in the following quotation that idea appears to be discountenanced:—

Judge not your fellow-men. Be content to know yourself. Be chaste, but do not chasten others. Be strictly correct yourself, and do not cut and carve other people. And learn not to impute wickedness to the unfortunate. If one man dies and another is preserved alive, why point at either of them as the object of Heaven's hatred? A truly good man loves all men, and rejects none; he respects all things, and rejects nothing; he associates with good men, and interchanges instruction with them; but bad men are the materials on which he works, and to bring such back to Taou is the great object of his life.[1]

Lao-Tze laid great stress on the virtues of self-abnegation, self-knowledge, and self-restraint. Of courage, truth, and honesty he says little; but if, in this respect, he fell below Confucius, most Christian moralists would consider that he surpassed him when he proclaimed the golden rule of Christianity, "Recompense evil with good."[2] Considerable discussion arose between their respective followers on this point. The words of Lao-Tze are quoted approvingly by several of his disciples:—

To those who are good to me I am good, and to those who are not good with me I am also good. (*Taou Tih King*, c. xlix.)

His ideal man was an embodiment of Taou, or Deity, and such a state it should be the object of every man to reach.

To know others is to be wise; but he who knows himself is enlightened. He who overcomes others is strong; but he who conquers himself is mighty. He who has a contented mind is rich. He who acts with energy has a purpose. He who does not act contrary to his nature continues long; and he who dies and perishes not enjoys eternity.[3]

He who lightly promises is sure to keep but little faith; he who is continually thinking things easy is sure to find them difficult. (*Ibid*, c. lxiii.)

Action should be taken before a thing has made its appearance; order should be secured before disorder has begun. (*Ibid*, lxiv.)

Like his more famous contemporary, Lao-Tze was fond of dwelling on the simplicity and beauty of primitive life, when sages endeavoured to keep the people innocent and simple, instead of teaching them to be learned and clever; to make them honest and unselfish, not to encourage them in hypocrisy and

[1] Douglas, *Confucianism and Taouism*, p. 194.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 197. [3] *Ibid*, p. 198. [4] *Ibid*, p. 204.

[1] Douglas, *Confucianism and Taoism*, p. 205.
[2] *Ibid*, 206.
[3] *Ibid*, c. xxxiii., Douglas, p. 207.

fraud. He had a healthy scorn for the vain person, and for the glib and shallow talker. As a man on tiptoe cannot stand still so a man who is always seeking prominence in talking cannot remain quiet and self-contained.

A man who is self-displaying does not really shine; he who is self-approving is not held in esteem; he who is self-praising has no merit; and he who is self-exalting does not stand high.[1]

Lao-Tze considered that "one pure act of internal resignation was worth more than a hundred thousand exercises of one's own will." But self-denial is a virtue which may readily be abused; and the sage forgot that every act of internal resignation is an exercise of the will, and one which often requires greater volitional power than an act of personal gratification.

The pure morality of the Chinese classics is the more surprising, in view of the mass of absurd formalities with which it is burdened. Here is a fine description of the good man:—

He will not tread in devious by-ways; he will not impose on himself in any secret apartment. He will amass virtue, and accumulate deeds of merit. He will feel kindly towards all creatures. He will be loyally, filially, loving to his younger brothers and submissive to his elder. He will make himself correct, and so transform others. He will pity orphans and compassionate widows; he will respect the old and cherish the young. Even the insect tribes, grass and trees, he should not hurt. He ought to pity the malignant tendencies of others; to rejoice over their excellences; to help them in their straits; to rescue them from their perils; to regard their gains as if they were his own, and their losses in the same way; not to publish their shortcomings; not to vaunt his own superiorities; to put a stop to what is evil, and display what is good; to yield much and take little for himself; to receive insult without resenting it, and honour without an appearance of apprehension; to bestow favours without seeking for a return, and give to others without any subsequent regret. This is what is called a good man. (*Thâi Shang*, or Tractate of Actions and their Retributions.)

The following is from another of the Taouist books called the *Classic of Purity*:—

The spirit of man loves purity, but his mind disturbs it. The mind of man loves stillness, but his desires drive it away. If he could always send his desires away, his mind would of itself become still. Let his mind be made clean, and his spirit will of itself become pure. (*Khing Kăng King*, c. iii.)

The philosophical quietism and indifference to life which are prominent in the faiths of the East are held up for imitation in the following sentence of Kwang-Tze:—

The true men of old knew nothing of the love of life or the hatred of death. Entrance into life occasioned them no joy; the exit from it awakened no resistance. Composedly they went and came. (*Writings of Kwang-Tze*, b. vi.)

The conception of Taou bears some resemblance to that of the Buddhist Nirvāna. Mr. Douglas draws attention to the "important distinction" that, while "the entrance into Nirvāna is the extinction of existence, the return to Taou is but the recall of the finite to the infinite, the creature to the creator."[1] It should, however, be borne in mind that both these terms denote ideas of a very vague and intangible nature. Many Buddhist authorities consider that Nirvāna implies not cessation of existence, but precisely that absorption of the individual spirit into the universal spirit which Taou is intended to signify, and if they are right the importance of Mr. Douglas's distinction vanishes.

Of the nature of this infinite spirit Lao-Tze knew nothing, and never attempted the shallow dogmatism which flows so readily from the lips of ignorance. His remarks concerning it appear to be intended to describe its modes of operation rather than to define its essential qualities. To him it was something which "could not be named," something which "baffled investigation"; it is clear that he did not regard it as having personality. "Taou," he says, "is empty; in operation exhaustless. In its depth it scans the future of all things. It blunts sharp angles. It unravels disorders. It softens the glare."[2]

[1] Douglas, p. 209.

[1] Douglas, p. 212. [2] *Ibid*, p. 211.

He ascribed to it, however, beneficent attributes, which are not readily distinguishable from those of a personal being. "Like a loving parent," says Mr. Douglas, in summarising his teaching, "it watches with a providential care over all created beings. From its portals they issued forth into life, and through all the changes and chances of existence it continues on their right hand and on their left, nourishing in love, imparting life to all, and refusing none. Though before all, above all, and in all, it yet assumes no authority; and, though all things submit to it, it does not regard itself as their master.......It does not strive with man.......It enters into the life of each individual thing; it penetrates the impenetrable; it produces, nourishes, enlarges, feeds, completes, ripens, cherishes, and covers all things. It is the good man's glory and the bad man's hope.......It gives a double portion to those who supply the wants of the needy.......It is everything and nothing; it is the smallest possible quantity, and yet the whole. It is the unity of the universe, and as such supports, strengthens, and nourishes all created things."[1]

Such a conception of the infinite—vague, indefinite, and paradoxical—would have been far from satisfactory to the framers of the Westminster Confession.

Taouism affords another and very melancholy instance of religious degeneration. The great philosopher was followed by a race of pigmies. Modern Taouism is mainly a system of magic and incantations, and its priests are the most ignorant and debased in China. But this cannot be deemed the logical result of Lao-Tze's teachings. Superstitious influences derived from Hinduism and elsewhere have penetrated his system, and even enthroned the rugged figure of the founder in a triple form of deity, which he himself would have rejected as an absurdity. The dreary fatuity of Taouism in its doctrinal aspect is, however, relieved by the wide acceptance of two small volumes, in which its practical side is set forth in a series of brief ethical maxims, which exert an enormous influence on the Chinese people. The first of these is the *Kan Ying Peen*, or *Book of Rewards and Punishments*, of which the following aphorisms are among the more favourable specimens :—

Be humane to animals.
Practise righteousness and filial piety; be affectionate towards your younger brothers, and respectful towards your elder brothers.
Rectify yourself, and convert men.
Have pity for orphans, and show compassion to widows.
Pity the misfortunes of others.
Rejoice in the well-being of others.
Help them who are in want.
Save men in danger.
Do not expose the faults of others.
Never boast of your superiority.
Prevent the evil, and exalt the good.
Forego much, and take little.
Bestow favours without expecting recompense.
Give willingly.
Never confuse right and wrong.
Don't rank faults as crimes.
When you recognise a fault in yourself, correct it.
When you know what is right, do it.
Don't seek your own advantage at the expense of others.
Don't suck other men's brains.
Don't conceal the virtues of others.
Don't expose the defects of others.
Don't give yourself up to ease and pleasure.
Never say anything you don't mean.[1]

The second of these volumes is the *Yin-chih-wăn*, or *Book of Secret Blessings*. It is so short that its words are only 541 in number, but its benevolent spirit causes it to be prized by Buddhists, Confucianists, and Taouists alike. In the following passage Mr. Douglas summarises the most valuable portion of its contents :—

Its teachings rest on a sound foundation, where they inculcate the necessity of purifying the heart as a preparation for all right-doing. Be upright, it says, and straightforward, and renew your heart. Be compassionate and loving. Be faithful to your master, and filially pious to your parents. Honour your elder brethren, and

[1] Douglas, pp. 211–15.

[1] Douglas, *Taouism*, c. vi.

be true to your friends. Help the unfortunate; save those who are in danger; and set free the bird taken in a snare. Have pity towards the orphan and the widow; honour the aged, and be kind to the poor. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bury the dead. Use just weights and measures, and do not overtax the people. Succour the sick, and give drink to the thirsty. ......Hide your neighbours' faults, and speak only of their good deeds, and let your mouth utter the true sentiments of your heart. In all your actions follow the principles of Heaven, and in all your words follow the purified heart of man. Have all the sages of antiquity before your eyes, and examine carefully your conscience. What good thing will be withheld from him who practises "secret benefits"?[1]

It can hardly be disputed that the true moral relations of human beings have seldom been set forth with greater force and comprehensiveness than by these ancient moralists, who constitute, perhaps, the chief claim of China to the world's esteem and admiration.

[1] Douglas, *Taouism*, c. vii.

MOHAMMEDANISM

FROM more than one point of view, the system established by the great Arabian reformer Mohammed is worthy of serious study. That one of the leading Christian Powers should also be the greatest Mohammedan Power of modern times is a striking fact, testifying to a degree of toleration which would have been impossible to the Christianity of the Middle Ages, and also showing that even for prudential considerations it is well for Englishmen to understand a religion with which they are brought into close relationship. Moreover, the religion of Mohammed is the only serious rival to Christianity; and, being from the simplicity of its main conception and the suitability of its ordinances well adapted to the needs of the semi-civilised races of the East, it has, especially in Africa, advanced with a rapidity which Christian missionaries are unable either to check or to emulate.

A brief sketch of Mohammed's life will form a suitable introduction to an account of his religious system. Most faiths centre in a great personality, and this is specially true of Islam. There are no "historic doubts" as to the actual existence of Mohammed; throughout his active career almost every detail of his life is known; every word of the Koran emanated from him, and as to this day the entire religious, political, and social system of the Moslem world is based on this one book, it is important to gain some insight into the character of the man who produced it. That career is of extraordinary interest; that character was one of the most powerful influences in human history.

Arabia, about the time of Mohammed's birth at Mecca in A.D. 570, was in a state of religious unrest and political chaos. Its wandering inhabitants, who are believed to be descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, and were therefore closely akin to the Jewish people, were mainly idolaters worshipping stars, stones, and fetishes, the special object of their adoration being the sacred stone contained in the Kaaba, which was believed to have been a kind of crystal originally brought straight from Paradise by the angel Gabriel, but which had become black by contact with the sinful lips of innumerable worshippers. There were many Jewish colonies which had been established after the destruction of Jerusalem 500 years earlier, while a number of Christian sects made the influence of their faith in more or less debased forms perceptible among the native tribes. The chief of these sects

were the Nestorians, the Arians, the Sabellians, the Eutychians, the Marianites, the Collyridians; but many other forms of religious eccentricity flourished in the freedom of the desert. The Nestorians, in the person of a half mythical monk, are supposed to have had considerable influence on the future prophet; but, according to Wellhausen, his leading tenets were drawn less from sources of a distinctively Jewish or Christian type than from the teachings of an unorganised body known as the Hanífites. These were men who did not attach themselves to any religious community, but were anchorites of an individualist and ascetic character, who taught a monotheistic faith in which elements of Essenism and Christianity were mingled. This comparative purity of life and doctrine doubtless helped to prevent the utter decay of religion in the Arabian peninsula; but the urgent need of moral reform was perceived by many before the advent of Mohammed. Indeed, a widespread expectation was in the air that the time was approaching when an Arabian Messiah should appear and found a new religion. The ground was prepared for a great social and religious revolution. The time was ripe, and the man appeared.

The father of Mohammed died before his son's birth, and, having at six years of age lost his mother also, the boy was brought up by his uncle, Abu Talib, who, though not a believer in his mission, remained while he lived the prophet's best friend. Until manhood Mohammed was in poor circumstances, tending the flocks of sheep and assisting his uncle in his business as a merchant. At the age of twenty-five Mohammed, through the offices of Abu Talib, obtained employment as a camel driver with a rich widow named Khadija, and took charge of a caravan conveying merchandise to Syria. Pleased with his shrewd and successful management, and attracted by his personal beauty, Khadija sent her sister to offer the young man her hand in marriage. Matters were promptly arranged, and Mohammed became a man of wealth and position. No great success, however, attended his own business enterprises. Religion and commerce sometimes require a good deal of reconciling, and Mohammed was not then an adept in the art of making the best of both worlds. Naturally reserved, and with a mind disposed to a poetic and dreamy mysticism, his mundane affairs were somewhat neglected. His religion assumed an increasingly earnest tone; he spent a large part of his time in lonely meditation in the desert and among the hills, and many an unseen conflict left its trace upon his soul.

Not until he was forty years old did Mohammed receive his first "divine revelation" in the solitude of the mountains near Mecca. Translated into modern language, this means that he then first became convinced that he had a mission to fulfil, to arouse men from their sins, their indifference, their superstition, to thunder into their ears a message from on high, and awaken them to living faith in one indivisible, all-powerful, and all-merciful God. Prolonged fasting, days of ecstatic contemplation, and vigils of the night in the silent valleys and gloomy mountain caves had made him a visionary, with a fanatical faith that God had inspired him to be the last and greatest of the prophets. This revelation, generally believed to be referred to in the short 96th sura of the Koran, he communicated to none but his immediate relatives and a faithful friend, Abu Bekr. Painful doubts as to the reality of the vision oppressed him, but were dispelled by the sympathy of his friends. For a long time haunted by these doubts of the divinity of his mission, his depression became so great that he was more than once on the point of committing suicide. Many of his friends called him a fool, a liar, a mad poet, and the city of Mecca for several years illustrated the proverb that a prophet hath no honour in his own country by a decisive rejection of his

claims. When conviction, however, had once taken possession of his mind, it was unshakeable. When his uncle begged him to cease his attempts to convert the Meccans, and so put an end to constant trouble, Mohammed said: "Though they gave me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to bring me back from my undertaking, yet will I not pause till the Lord carry my cause to victory, or till I die for it." Turning away, he burst into tears, and Abu Talib replied: "Go in peace, son of my brother, and say what thou wilt, for by God I will on no condition abandon thee."

The little body of believers grew slowly. In four years Mohammed had about forty proselytes, mostly of the lower ranks, and he then felt himself justified in coming forward as a public preacher and denouncing the superstitions of the Meccans. To establish a new religion was, so far, no part of his intention; he desired simply to recall them to the purer and truer faith of their ancestor, Abraham. Zealous for the worship of the Kaaba, and dreading lest the profitable pilgrimages to their city should fall into decay, the people of Mecca showed the bitterest hostility to Mohammed, opposing and ridiculing his pretensions at every turn. So violent was their hatred that Abu Talib thought it prudent to shelter him for a time in a place of security in the country. Mohammed's subsequent bitterness and intolerance towards the Meccans must have arisen in part from their persistent enmity against him. The sudden conversion of the gigantic Omar, afterwards the second Caliph, secured to Mohammed a powerful supporter. During the seclusion of his chief he continued to spread the doctrine, and after three or four years a truce was patched up, and Mohammed returned to Mecca. About this time his wife died, his uncle followed, and changes of fortune reduced him again to poverty. He went to another part of the country, but found himself in danger, and barely escaped with life. A wonderful dream of a journey to Jerusalem on the back of the fabled horse Borak aroused the sceptical smiles of even his own followers. But a turning-point in his career was at hand. In a party of pilgrims from the rival city of Yathrib, afterwards called Medina, Mohammed made several converts, who were apparently predisposed by Hanífitism to accept his essential doctrines. On their visit the following year their numbers were so greatly increased that Mohammed entered into an alliance with them, and formed the design of seeking a more congenial home in the friendly city. His flight thither in 622 was considered an event of such supreme importance that the Mohammedan era or Hegira is dated from it.

Mohammed was now among friends; his converts increased rapidly in numbers, and the once-despised impostor was recognised as the ruler of a city and of two powerful tribes. He soon felt himself strong enough to attack the Meccans in open warfare, and the victory of Bedr added greatly to his renown and the number of his adherents. A campaign against the Jews, who had received with taunts and ridicule Mohammed's attempts to convert them, resulted in the easy capture of many of their strongholds. A repulse at Ohod at the hands of the famous warrior Khalid checked, but did not prevent, the rapid growth of the new power. Missionaries were sent to all parts of Arabia, and even to neighbouring countries, including Egypt and Persia, and a year later the prophet celebrated in peace the pilgrimage in the holy city of his enemies. An expedition against the city of Kheibar in 628 nearly cost Mohammed his life. A dish of poisoned meat was put before him, and, though he only tasted it, the effects of the poison remained in his system for the rest of his life. In September, 629, a combined force of Arabs and Romans inflicted a disastrous defeat upon the Moslem army; but fresh victories made good the loss, and the final conquest of

Mecca was followed by the submission of the tribes and the acknowledgment of Mohammed's spiritual and temporal supremacy over the Arabian peninsula. The vanquished marvelled at the magnanimity of the victor. Only three or four persons, and those criminals, were put to death, and a general amnesty was then proclaimed. This lenity, however, was not invariably practised. Two years before a Jewish tribe had befriended the Meccans, though without taking arms against the Moslems, who lay besieged in Medina. Both parties were in extremity; the siege had to be raised; a terrible storm scattered the enemies of the faith; and the unfortunate Jews, to the number of 600 or 700, were savagely butchered in cold blood before the eyes of the prophet. In the year 632 extensive preparations were made for a campaign against the Syrians, and while engaged in this work Mohammed was seized with fever. His strenuous labours, intense excitement, the loss of his little boy Ibrahim, and the excruciating pain sometimes felt from the poison, further combined to weaken his frame. He became aware that his end was approaching; he addressed his followers in the mosque as often as he was able, exhorting them to righteousness and piety and peace among themselves. Each man, he declared, must work out his own salvation. He read passages from the Koran, asked forgiveness of any whom he had wronged, appointed his successors, and prepared his weeping followers for his death. His head pillowed on the lap of his favourite wife, Ayesha, his lips murmuring of pardon and paradise, the dying agonies of a great soul came to an end, and the prophet of Arabia breathed his last.

His people were moved to keen distress. Omar, half-frantic, drew his scimitar, rushed among the crowd, and declared he would strike off the head of anyone who dared to say the prophet of God was no more. Abu Bekr calmed him, and preached resignation to the will of God.

Mohammed was a man of imposing presence, of medium height, broad-shouldered, and strongly built, with fine features, coal-black hair and eyes, and a long beard. His mental powers were of a high order, his manners reserved yet affable and courteous, in speech laconic and often humorous, a man of strong passions but noble impulses, capable of great love, great generosity, and great vengeance—altogether a character of surprising force, capacity, shrewdness, and determination. Temperate and prudent in youth, he gained in manhood the name of "Al Amin," or "the faithful," from his fair and upright dealing. Just and affectionate in private life, he lived in the humblest style in a poor hut, eating the plainest food, lighting his own fire, and mending his own clothes and shoes, having given his slaves their freedom. For months together he would seldom eat a hearty meal, always sharing it with those whose need was greater: a number of the poor lived entirely on his generosity. Perfidious and cruel on more than one occasion, he was capable of the noblest magnanimity. The following beautiful story is worth passing on: "Sleeping one day under a palm tree, he awoke suddenly to find an enemy named Durthur standing over him with drawn sword. 'O, Mohammed, who is there now to save thee?' cried the man. 'God,' answered Mohammed. Durther dropped his sword. Mohammed seized it, and cried in turn: 'O, Durthur, who is there now to save thee?' 'No one,' replied Durthur. 'Then learn from me to be merciful,' said Mohammed, and handed him back the weapon. Durthur became one of his firmest friends."

Mohammed was highly susceptible to the influence of female beauty. He made such ample use of his opportunities that by 629 he had had eleven wives, though he did not take a second till after the death of Khadija. Heaven was indulgent to the prophet's weakness, and vouchsafed special revelations at convenient seasons to justify privileges in

excess of those allowed to ordinary believers. Such lavish matrimony, however, had its drawbacks; the ladies quarrelled among themselves, and divine interposition became necessary to the restoration of domestic order. Mohammed has been severely blamed for his relations with the other sex, and specially for the opportune revelations by which he sanctioned his undue indulgence. Obviously, however, in this as in other matters, it is not quite fair to judge him by standards which were unknown to his age and country. The example of the Hebrew patriarchs may extenuate, though not perhaps remove, the censure, while it might be urged that so many Christian rulers have similarly offended that we should hesitate to cast the first stone. And, as Mr. Bosworth Smith points out, if Mohammed gave himself exceptional privileges, he imposed on himself exceptional privations in the way of prayers, fasting, and poverty. To consider Mohammed a voluptuary in the ordinary sense would, therefore, be too harsh an application of the term.

The fanatical devotion which Mohammed aroused in his followers was one of the chief causes of his ultimate success. His intense earnestness first convinced them of the reality of his mission, and esteem for the man was reinforced by respect for his achievements. For long the Arabs would have none of his religion, but, impressed by his growing power, they grew to believe that nothing could withstand the might of his deity; they willingly gave up the idols to which they were but half-devoted, and abandoned themselves to enthusiasm for a grander cause. Over his immediate followers his powerful personality gave him a marvellous ascendancy. The wisdom of his decisions at Medina is generally admitted; indeed, Wellhausen considers Mohammed's work in that city as redounding more to his credit than the production of the Koran. Clearly the religious enthusiast had a strong vein of practical good sense in his strangely compacted nature.

The question of Mohammed's sincerity has been a subject of prolonged and sometimes far from lukewarm discussion. At one time he was usually called (as by Dante) "the false prophet," and no one thought of questioning the aptness of the designation. Nowadays we have a little more charity and a good deal more knowledge. A Christian writer, the Rev. J. W. H. Stobart, remarks on the change which has taken place in regard to the founder of Islam. Luther regarded him as the first-born of Satan; Melancthon as having been inspired by the same personage; Prideaux considered him as from first to last a wilful deceiver, and so forth. As Mr. Stobart says, the time has come when such bitter epithets and sweeping condemnation are unnecessary, and notes the opinion of Freeman that "it is no longer thought any part of the duty of a Christian writer to see nothing but wickedness and imposture in the author of the great antagonistic creed."[1] Mr. Stobart's own attitude, however, is not entirely free from the prepossessions which he deprecates. Adopting the view of Sir William Muir, he regards Mohammed's conception of his divine mission as resulting from the promptings of "spiritual pride and ambition," under the temptation of which "he fell."[2] "If Mohammed's sole purpose had been the search after truth, if his eye had been single, the still small voice would have doubtless suggested the way," because "it is hard to believe that the Spirit of Truth leaves in darkness and error the honest heart which looks to Him for light."[3] But "the stealthy advances of a worldly ambition blinded his mental vision, blunted his dependence on a Higher Power, and by the suggestions of the Evil One took captive his soul."[4] There is more to the same effect, as well as a reiteration of Sir W. Muir's charge that Mohammed was guilty of blasphemously "forging the name of God."

[1] *Islam and its Founder* (S.P.C.K.), p. 64.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 66. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

Such remarks would appear to have come direct from a theological college. Their lack of enlightenment is partially compensated by the admission on the next page that "ambition could hardly have been altogether his prevailing motive, for he made no provision to perpetuate in his own family the temporal power which was his." Wealth and regal state he coveted not, for "when his name was exalted above the name of all creatures, borne on the prayers of the faithful, and made second only to Allah himself, he still occupied the same humble house, at times performed even the menial duties of his household, still exercised himself in acts of humility, and still expressed himself as much as ever in need of the mercy of the All-Compassionate for his entrance into Paradise."[1] This writer comes to the conclusion that "a substantial belief in the reality of a divine commission impelled Mohammed forward," and "was the secret motive which called into being those spiritual claims of which the results have been so memorable." His original purity and sincerity, however, became tarnished by interested motives, until, "by the very deceitfulness of his heart, he came to consider his wild and sinful impulse as the will of Heaven, and as indubitable inspiration from on high."[2]

There is probably some truth in the latter verdict, for the character of Mohammed undoubtedly, as his circumstances changed, lost a good deal of its ethical sweetness; but the writer does not err on the side of charity. There is a general consensus of opinion regarding Mohammed's complete sincerity during his earlier career, combined with a suspicion that he became self-seeking and insincere as he grew older. Religious degeneration is not an uncommon phenomenon, it is true; but its importance must be grievously over-estimated when its manifestations are treated as promptings of the "Evil One." That is no great advance on the position of Luther. Even Sir William Muir admits that Mohammed's conviction that he was inspired was reached slowly and only after severe mental distress, and that "there is nothing so remarkable as the faith reposed by Mohammed in the Deity as an ever-present and all-controlling agency."[1]

Wellhausen points out that Mohammed had apparently everything to lose and nothing to gain by proclaiming the new faith. His estrangement with his native city must have caused him great anxiety, for to an Arab it is a living death to be at variance with his own people.[2] It is never easy for the mind of the West to fathom the mind of the East. It is by no means an improbable supposition that actions which to us may appear the result of conscious deception may to an Arab imply nothing of the kind. To him the suggestions of prudence and self-interest may not be at all incompatible with the deepest ecstasy of the pietist. Like many other great mystics, Mohammed was afflicted with epilepsy, or more probably catalepsy—a derangement which must have had a large share in producing the medley of ill-digested ideas which composed his mental equipment. He had convulsions, ecstasies, trances; he heard voices; he saw visions; angels appeared to him; God spoke to him as clearly as to Abraham of old. Such a mind, dominated by the fierce fatalism of the East, limited by hereditary influences, filled with overwhelming aspirations towards righteousness, but struggling against an inevitable ignorance, must be more or less incomprehensible to modern reasoners. That Mohammed never attained a consistent and worthy conception of deity is not surprising. It is what he actually achieved that astounds us. He cannot be measured with a foot-rule; he must be judged by the ideas and conditions of his own time.

On this question of Mohammed's

[1] *Islam and its Founder*, p. 67.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 68.

[1] *Mohammed and Islam.*
[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Mohammed."

alleged self-deception, Mr. Bosworth Smith pronounces an opinion which appears more consonant with both reason and charity than those previously quoted: "Who can draw the line where enthusiasm ends and self-deception or even imposture begins? No one who knows human nature will deny that the two are often perfectly consistent with each other. Once persuaded fully of his divine mission as a whole, a man unconsciously begins to invest his personal fancies and desires with a like sanction; it is not that he tampers with his conscience; he rather subjects conscience and reason, appetite and affection, to the one dominating influence; and so, as time goes on, with perfect good faith, gets to confound what comes from below with what comes from above.......The more fully convinced a man is of the goodness of his cause, the more likely is he to forget the means in the end; he need not consciously assert that the end justifies the means, but his eyes are so fixed upon the end that they overlook the interval between the idea and its realisation."[1] We have ample evidence of the substantial unity of Mohammed's career. He never wavered in his belief in his mission, yet he never represented himself as more than a weak and fallible mortal. "I doubt," says Mr. Bosworth Smith, "whether any other man whose external conditions changed so much ever himself changed less to meet them; the accidents are changed; the essence seems to me to be the same in all."[2]

Let us judge Mohammed fairly, and keep the facts in mind. We know that in a world of superstition he proclaimed the unity of a supreme being; that he limited polygamy and reckless divorce; that he encouraged the emancipation of slaves and set the example; and that he laid down as a fundamental principle the equality of all Moslem believers;[3] that he was amiable and just, generous and tolerant. We in the present day are not likely to consider him divinely inspired, and it is equally hard to hold that he was an impostor.

Islam, which is the correct name of the youngest of the great religions, "comes from a word meaning in the first instance 'to be at rest, to have done one's duty, to be at perfect peace,' and is commonly held to mean 'submission to the will and commandments of God.'"[1] Moslem, or Muslim, the name given to its believers, is derived from *Islam*, and means "a righteous man." To practise submission to the will of God obviously implies the belief that that will has made its dictates known; and the religion of Mohammed, like that of the Jews and Christians, is avowedly based upon a direct revelation alleged to have been made by God to man. No difficulty arising from the vague connotation of the term "God" presents itself to the Moslem; to him God is a being so well known, holding such intimate relations with the life of human beings as to make his guiding care of them not merely credible, but axiomatic.

To the simple root-conception of Islam, faith in one God, must be added its consequence, faith in Mohammed as the last and greatest of his prophets. To the Moslem the one is as inevitable as the other; the European distinguishes between them. In the words of Gibbon: "If the first article is an eternal truth, the second is a necessary fiction."[2]

The revelations believed to have been made at various times to Mohammed, as the circumstances of his career furnished occasion, were dictated by him to a scribe who wrote them down, probably in a hurried manner, on any convenient substance, such as date leaves, tablets of white stone, bones, and pieces of parchment: these, after the prophet's death, were collected and copied, without regard to order of time or subject, and formed the Koran, or *the Reading*, the 114

[1] *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, p. 118.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *England and Islam*, by H. Crossfield.

[1] Clodd's *Childhood of Religions*, p. 204.
[2] *Decline and Fall*, vol. iii., p. 488.

suras or chapters of which not only furnish the whole civil as well as religious code of the Mohammedans, but are believed by them to be the direct, uncreated, and eternal word of God, perfect and complete in every particular.

The Koran is a strange book. The lofty and the puerile, the grand and the ignoble, are so intermingled that it is sometimes hard to realise that it is the product of one mind; hard to feel that the benignity and the ferocity of Mohammed's conception of God did not present themselves to him as essential contradictions. Yet there can be no doubt that this illiterate and half-barbarous Arab had a great and wonderful mind—a mind which has proved one of the most potent forces in human history.

We shall presently let the Koran say something for itself, but in the meantime the following estimate of it by an acute and able historian may be of interest :—

In philosophy it is incomparably inferior to the writings of Sakya Mouni, the founder of Buddhism ; in its science it is absolutely worthless. On speculative or doubtful things it is copious enough ; but in the exact, where a test can be applied to it, it totally fails. Its astronomy, cosmogony, physiology, are so puerile as to invite our mirth, if the occasion did not forbid. They belong to the old times of the world, the morning of human knowledge. The earth is firmly balanced in its seat by the weight of the mountains; the sky is supported over it like a dome, and we are instructed in the wisdom and power of God by being told to find a crack in it if we can. Ranged in stories seven in number are the heavens, the highest being the habitation of God, whose throne—for the Koran does not reject Assyrian ideas—is sustained by winged animal forms. The shooting stars are pieces of red-hot stone thrown by angels at impure spirits when they approach too closely. Of God the Koran is full of praise, setting forth, often in not unworthy imagery, his majesty. Though it bitterly denounces those who give him any equals, and assures them that their sin will never be forgiven; that in the judgment day they must answer the fearful question, "Where are my companions about whom ye disputed?" though it inculcates an absolute dependence on the mercy of God, and denounces as criminals all those who make a merchandise of religion, its ideas of the Deity are altogether anthropomorphic. He is only a gigantic man living in a paradise. In this respect, though exceptional passages might be cited, the reader rises from a perusal of the 114 chapters of the Koran with a final impression that they have given him low and unworthy thoughts ; nor is it surprising that one of the Mohammedan sects reads it in such a way as to find no difficulty in asserting that "from the crown of the head to the breast God is hollow, and from the breast downward he is solid ; that he has black curled hair, and roars like a lion at every watch of the night......As to man, Mohammed is diffuse enough respecting a future state, speaking with clearness of a resurrection, the judgment-day, Paradise, the torment of hell, the worm that never dies, the pains that never end ; but with all this precise description of the future there are many errors as to the past.[1]

Comparing the literary merits of the Koran with those of the Bible, the former must be admitted to reach a lower degree of excellence :—

Its most celebrated passages, as those on the nature of God in chapters ii. and xxiv., will bear no comparison with parallel ones in the Psalms and Book of Job. In the narrative style the story of Joseph in chapter xii., compared with the same incidents related in Genesis, shows a like inferiority. Mohammed also adulterates his work with many Christian legends, derived probably from the apocryphal gospel of St. Barnabas ; he mixes with many of his own inventions the scripture account of the temptation of Adam, the Deluge, Jonah and the whale, enriching the whole with stories like the later Night Entertainments of his country, the Seven Sleepers, Gog and Magog, and all the wonders of genii, sorcery, and charms.[2]

The Koran, however, has a better side; indeed, it could hardly have exerted so vast an influence on the life of humanity if it were devoid of the purer elements of religion. We cannot fully agree with Professor Draper when he says: "The Koran abounds in excellent moral suggestions and precepts; its composition is so fragmentary that we cannot turn to a single page without finding maxims of which all men must approve." The moral element in the Koran is disproportionately slender, and is well nigh lost amid the storm of threats and denunciations, the lurid pictures of the future state, the imperfect views of God, which betray its origin with sufficient clearness. Still, it is true

[1] Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, vol. i., p. 342

[2] *Ibid*, p. 343.

that "there is a perpetual insisting on the necessity of prayer, an inculcation of mercy, almsgiving, justice, fasting, pilgrimage, and other good works; institutions respecting conduct, both social and domestic, debts, witnesses, marriage, wine, and the like; above all, a constant stimulation to do battle with the infidel and blasphemer."[1]

No religion more faithfully reflects the conditions amid which it arose than does Islam. Springing from a personal founder, it naturally partakes of his character; its indebtedness to Judaism is plainly manifest; while the influence of the old Arab polytheism is perceptible in many of the inferior elements already mentioned. A vigorously monotheistic idea of God—religious sincerity of the intensest nature, the assiduous inculcation of good works, and an admirable breadth of toleration for the great and earnest of other faiths, are some of the chief merits of Mohammed's creed. An inability to rise beyond the current semi-barbarous notions of moral and spiritual truth, and the stereotyping of those conceptions in a fixed and inflexible system which has encouraged a violent bigotry and shown itself practically incapable of further progress, are the leading drawbacks of the Mohammedan faith.

The Mohammedans divide their religion into two distinct parts: *Imân—i.e.*, faith or theory; and *Dîn—i.e.*, religion or practice; and teach that it is built on five fundamental points, one belonging to faith and the other four to practice.[2]

The first is the confession of faith that "there is no God but the true God, and that Mohammed is his prophet." Under this head are comprehended six distinct branches—viz.:—

1. Belief in God.
2. In his angels.
3. In his scriptures.
4. In his prophets.
5. In the resurrection and day of judgment.
6. In God's absolute decree and predetermination of both good and evil.[1]

The four points relating to practice are:—

1. Prayer, under which are comprehended those washings or purifications which are necessary preparations required before prayer.
2. Alms.
3. Fasting; and
4. The Pilgrimage to Mecca.[2]

Of these duties the Caliph Omar II. said that prayer carried the believer half way to God; fasting brought him to his door, and alms gained him admission.

Prayer is enjoined five times during the twenty-four hours:—

1. In the morning before sunrise.
2. When noon is past, and the sun begins to decline from the meridian.
3. In the afternoon before sunset.
4. In the evening after sunset, and before day be shut in; and
5. After the day is shut in, and before the first watch of the night.[3]

Although great importance is attached to the regular performance of this duty, what is principally to be regarded, say the Moslem doctors, is the inward disposition of the heart, which is the life and spirit of prayer; the most punctual observance of the external rites and ceremonies being of little or no avail, if performed without due attention, reverence, devotion, and hope.[4] The following passage from the Koran emphasizes this higher aspect of religious duty:—

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer towards the east and the west, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God and the last day, and the angels, and the Scriptures, and the prophets; who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred and unto orphans, and the needy and the stranger, and those who ask, and for redemption of captives; who is constant at prayer and giveth alms; and of those

[1] Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, p. 344.
[2] Sale's *Koran*, Preface, sec. 4.

[1] Sale's Preface, sec. 4. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

who perform their covenant when they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in adversity and hardships and in time of violence: these are they who are true, and these are they who fear God.[1]

The Koran gives no set forms of prayer, but the first of the following passages might serve as such, and is one of the most favourable specimens :—

God will not force any soul beyond its capacity; it shall have the good which it gaineth, and it shall suffer the evil which it gaineth. O Lord, punish us not if we forget or act sinfully. O Lord, lay not on us a burden like that which thou hast laid on those who have been before us;[2] neither make us, O Lord, to bear what we have not strength to bear, but be favourable unto us, and spare us, and be merciful unto us.[3]

O my son, be constant at prayer, and command that which is just, and forbid that which is evil; and be patient under the afflictions which shall befall thee; for this is a duty absolutely incumbent on all men. Distort not thy face out of contempt for men, neither walk in the earth with insolence; for God loveth no arrogant, vainglorious person. And be moderate in thy pace and lower thy voice; for the most ungrateful of all voices surely is the voice of asses.[4]

Observe the stated times of prayer, and pay the legal alms; and lend unto God an acceptable loan; for whatever good ye send before for your souls ye shall find the same with God. This will be better, and will merit a greater reward. And ask God forgiveness; for God is ready to forgive and merciful.[5]

Regularly perform thy prayer at the declension of the sun, at the first darkness of the night, and the prayer of daybreak; for the prayer of daybreak is borne witness unto by the angels. And watch some part of the night in the same exercise, as a work of supererogation for thee; peradventure thy Lord will raise thee to an honourable station......Pronounce not thy prayer aloud, neither pronounce it with too low a voice, but follow a middle way between these; and say, Praise be unto God, who hath not begotten any child; who hath no partner in the kingdom, nor hath any to protect him from contempt; and magnify him by proclaiming his greatness.[6]

Charity in the form of alms is a great point in the faith of Islam. Alms are of two sorts, legal and voluntary. The former, represented by the taxes paid to the State, are of indispensable obligation, being commanded by the law, which directs and determines both the portion which is to be given and of what things it ought to be given. The voluntary alms, which usually take the form of distributing food to the poor, are left to everyone's liberty, to give more or less, as he shall see fit. The Mohammedan law prescribes that alms are to be given of cattle, money, corn, fruits, and wares sold. Two and a half per cent. of the value is the customary proportion, but none is payable unless the value reaches a certain amount, nor until the twelfth month of possession is begun; nor are alms due for cattle employed in tilling the ground, or in carrying burdens. Many Mohammedans have rendered themselves illustrious by almsgiving. Hassan, the grandson of the prophet, is related to have thrice in his life divided his substance equally between himself and the poor, and twice to have given away all he had; and the generality of Moslems are so addicted to the doing of good that they extend their charity even to brutes.[1]

Many injunctions to almsgiving, usually joined with those to prayer, occur in the Koran. The following passages are illustrations :—

Give unto him who is of kin to thee his reasonable due; and also to the poor and the stranger: this is better for those who seek the face of God; and they shall prosper. Whatever ye shall give in usury, to be an increase of men's substance, shall not be increased by the blessing of God; but whatever ye shall give in alms, for God's sake, they shall receive a twofold reward.[2]

They will ask thee what they shall bestow in alms. Answer, the good which ye bestow, let it be given to parents, and kindred, and orphans, and the poor, and the stranger.[3]

Alms are to be distributed only unto the poor and the needy, and those who are employed in collecting and distributing the same, and unto those whose hearts are reconciled, and for the redemption of captives, and unto those who are in debt and insolvent, and for the advancement of God's religion, and unto the traveller. This is an ordinance from God, and God is knowing and wise.[4]

They will ask thee concerning wine and lots.

[1] Koran, c. ii.
[2] An allusion to the onerous observances of the Jews.
[3] Koran, c. ii.
[4] *Ibid*, c. xxxi.
[5] *Ibid*, c. lxxiii.
[6] *Ibid*, c. xvii.

[1] Sale's Preface, sec. 4.
[2] Koran, c. xxx.
[3] *Ibid*, c. ii.
[4] *Ibid*, c. ix.

Answer, In both there is great sin, and also some things of use unto men; but their sinfulness is greater than their use. They will ask thee also what they shall bestow in alms; answer, What ye have to spare. Thus God showeth his signs unto you, that peradventure ye might seriously think of this present world and of the next. They will also ask thee concerning orphans; answer, To deal righteously with them is best; and if ye intermeddle with the management of what belongs to them, do them no wrong; they are your brethren.[1]

Ye will never attain unto righteousness until ye give in alms of that which ye love.[2]

The believer is directed to be charitable without ostentation :—

Alms given in secret atone for sins, and shall have their reward.[3]

Almsgiving, being looked upon by the conscientious Moslem as securing an immediate good to the recipient as well as his blessing and prayers, is practised by many who neglect much of the orthodox ceremonial of Islam.[4]

Fasting is a duty of so great moment that Mohammed used to say it was "the gate of religion." It comprehends three degrees :—

1. The restraining the natural appetites of the body.
2. The restraining the ears, eyes, tongue, hands, feet, and other members from sin; and
3. The fasting of the heart from worldly cares, and refraining the thoughts from everything besides God.[5]

O true believers, a fast is ordained you, as it was ordained unto those before you, that ye may fear God. A certain number of days shall ye fast; but he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast an equal number of other days. And those who can keep it, and do not, must redeem their neglect by maintaining of a poor man. And he who voluntarily dealeth better with the poor man than he is obliged, this shall be better for him. But if ye fast, it shall be better for you, if ye knew it. The month of Ramadan shall ye fast, in which the Koran was sent down from heaven, a direction unto men, and declarations of direction, and the distinction between good and evil.[6]

[1] *Ibid*, c. ii. [2] *Ibid*, c. iii.
[3] Stobart, *Islam and its Founder*, p. 194.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 195. [5] Sale's Preface, sec. 4.
[6] Koran, c. ii.

During each day of the month of Ramadan the Moslems keep a strict fast from daybreak till sunset. At night, however, they are allowed to eat and drink their fill, until, in the words of the Koran, they "can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the daybreak." So strictly is the fast kept that it is considered to be broken by bathing, by the smelling of perfume; and, among the severer ascetics, by opening the mouth to speak, thereby breathing the air too freely. This fast involves no slight hardship during the long days of the hot Arabian summer, but it is mitigated in the case of travellers, sick persons, including all whose health would be injured by fasting, expectant mothers, old persons, and young children. All are obliged, however, when they become able, to fast an equal number of other days; and the breaking of the fast is ordered to be expiated by giving alms to the poor.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is so necessary a point of practice that, according to a tradition of Mohammed, he who dies without performing it may as well die a Jew or a Christian.[1] The following are among the terms in which it is enjoined in the Koran :—

Perform the pilgrimage of Mecca, and the visitation of God; and if ye be besieged, send that offering which shall be easiest......The pilgrimage must be performed in the known months......Make provision for your journey; but the best provision is piety.[2]

Proclaim unto the people a solemn pilgrimage; let them come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel, arriving from every distant road; that they may be witnesses of the advantages which accrue to them from visiting this holy place, and may commemorate the name of God on the appointed days, in gratitude for the brute cattle which he hath bestowed on them. Wherefore eat thereof, and feed the needy and the poor. Afterwards let them put an end to the neglect of their persons; and let them pay their vows, and compass the ancient house. This let them do. And whoever shall regard the sacred ordinances of God, this will be better for him in the sight of his Lord.[3]

The scrupulous cleanliness of the

[1] Sale's Preface, sec. 4. [2] Koran, c. ii.
[3] *Ibid*, c. xxii.

Moslems is an honourable feature in their faith. The prophet is said to have declared that "the practice of religion is founded on cleanliness," and a commentator has reckoned among the degrees of purification the cleansing of the heart from blameable inclinations, and the purging from one's thoughts all affections which may divert them from God.[1]

It will be seen that the essential and positive doctrines of Islam are few and simple. Its negative precepts deal with the ordinary offences against social well-being—in a somewhat barbarous spirit, it is true, but not without occasional gleams of humane feeling. Theft is sternly punished: "If a man or woman steal, cut off their hands."[2] The old Jewish law of exact retribution is retained: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life." Whether such laws are a wholesome restraint on evil is to be decided rather by the requirements of civil society than by religious enactments. Adultery is punishable either by imprisonment for life or by death, but the care to be taken in obtaining proof of the offence, no less than four witnesses being required, renders the crime almost unknown; and the liberty of the male Moslem to have four wives practically confines it to the female sex. The severe beating awarded to a false accusation is also calculated to reduce the number of charges. A text condemning gambling and the use of intoxicating liquors has already been quoted. Murder is forbidden; the punishment, if the victim be a believer, is declared to be "Hell-fire for ever," and presumably the criminal is put to death as the speediest means of qualifying him for its torments. The law of strict retaliation holds good, and it is only when there are extenuating circumstances that the death penalty is not inflicted. In such cases the crime may be commuted by payment of a fine to the family of the slain person. The latter's representatives are not allowed to torture the criminal to death, or to exceed a fitting punishment. Unintentional homicide is gently dealt with; the culprit may, according to the circumstances of the case, expiate his offence by freeing a believer from captivity, fasting two months, or paying a sufficient fine to the family of the victim. Unintentional wounds are usually punished by infliction of a carefully-graduated money fine.[1]

The distribution of property by will is regulated by the Koran; a man is not allowed to will away from his family more than one-third of his estate, the remainder being divided between his relatives in fixed proportions, and the interests of women and children being duly protected.

As will be seen, the severity of many of the Mohammedan laws is mitigated by a spirit of reason and humanity which must be considered remarkable, taking into account the character of the time in which Mohammed lived; it was certainly an advance upon the legislation of Europe at the same epoch. Theft, for instance, is a venial offence if committed to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Unfortunate debtors are treated with great leniency. If the prospect of payment is almost hopeless, the creditor is recommended to remit the debt as alms.[2] Insolvency and inability to work in order to discharge the claim cancel all further obligation.[3] At the same time, the Koran emphatically enjoins the most conscientious fulfilment of all private contracts. Usury is condemned, and this is understood to apply to the taking of interest for money. "Truly selling is but as usury, and yet God hath permitted selling and forbidden usury."[4]

The following passage, advocating a

[1] Rev. J. H. Stobart, *Islam and its Founder*, p. 195.
[2] Sale's Preface, sec. 4.

[1] Chambers's *Encyclopædia*, art. "Mohammedanism."
[2] Koran, c. ii.
[3] Chambers's *Encyclopædia*, art. "Mohammedanism."
[4] Koran, c. ii.

written record of debts, contains a very shrewd touch at the end :—

O true believers, when ye bind yourselves one to the other in a debt for a certain time, write it down.......But if he who owneth the debt be foolish, or weak, or be not able to dictate himself, let his agent dictate according to equity; and call to witness two witnesses of your neighbouring men; but if there be not two men, let there be a man and two women of those whom ye shall choose for witnesses; if one of those women should mistake, *the other of them will cause her to recollect.*[1]

The prophet's simple life led him to reprove anxiety to multiply riches, especially if foul means be employed. "Woe to every slanderer and backbiter who heapeth up riches and thinketh they can render him immortal. He shall surely be cast into hell."[2]

In reading the Koran we frequently meet with the assertion that in the day of judgment "one soul shall not be able to obtain anything on behalf of another soul";[3] "no soul shall acquire any merits or demerits but for itself; and no burdened soul shall bear the burden of another."[4] This is viewed by a Christian writer as amounting to "a direct denial of the Redemption,"[5] though the greatest of the Apostles has expressed the same idea in almost identical language: "Every man shall bear his own burden." To the Rationalist it would seem that, if the theory of individual responsibility is true, it is well to hold it consistently. "Hereditary taint from the Fall is nowhere admitted. Adam fell, it is true, by eating the forbidden fruit; but his fall (as it would appear) was the consequence, not the cause, of the proneness of his nature to sin. All men have sinned, but it has been each his own fault, acting independently, and not because of anything antecedent."[6]

While it can hardly be denied that, on the whole, the influence of the Koran has been prejudicial to the position of women, it is only fair to remark that

[1] *Koran*, c. ii. [2] *Ibid*, c. civ.
[3] *Ibid*, c. lxxxii. [4] *Ibid*, c. vi.
[5] Stobart, *Islam*, p. 92.
[6] Sir W. Muir, *The Corân* (S.P.C.K.), p. 54.

Islam should not be too hastily condemned for this. Some of the special features of Moslem ethics are clearly the product of Oriental habits of life, and it should not be assumed that those habits are of necessity immoral because foreign to our own. As Sir William Muir points out: "The Corân not only denounces any illicit laxity between the sexes in the severest terms, but exposes the transgressor to condign punishment. For this reason, and because the conditions of what is licit are so accommodating and wide, a certain negative virtue (it can hardly be called continence or chastity) pervades Mohammedan society, in contrast with which the gross and systematic immorality in certain parts of every European community may be regarded by the Christian with shame and confusion. In a purely Mohammedan country, however low may be the general level of moral feeling, the still lower depths of fallen humanity are comparatively unknown."[1]

Though we have not space in which to offer any further estimate of Mohammed's character, we may quote the judicious words in which Dr. Weil expresses his view of the founder of Islam :—

As a reformer (which Mohammed originally was, and desired to be) he is entitled to our unqualified recognition and admiration. An Arab who could lay bare the defects of the prevailing Judaism and Christianity, and, not without risk to his life, sought to destroy Polytheism, and implant among his people the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, deserves not merely a place by the side of the greatest men in history; more than that, he merits the name of Prophet. But, as soon as he ceased to be tolerant, so soon as he sought to gain victory for the truth by means of secret assassination and open war, and put forth in the name of the Almighty a new code of political, ceremonial, civil, police, and criminal law, he impressed on himself and on his utterances the stamp of human weakness and decay.[2]

An interesting anecdote which furnished the occasion for a chapter in the Koran, and reveals the essential nobility of the Prophet's nature, may here be

[1] Muir's *Corân*, p. 61. [2] *Ibid*, p. 63.

inserted. He was once engaged in conversation with some rich and powerful persons, when a blind man approached, and requested to be taught about God. Mohammed was annoyed at the interruption, and turned away without making any reply. On reflection he perceived his error, and in the sura entitled "He Frowned" rebukes himself thus:—

The prophet frowned and turned aside, because the blind man came unto him; and how dost thou know whether he shall peradventure be cleansed from his sins, or whether he shall be admonished, and the admonition shall profit him? The man who is wealthy thou receivest respectfully; but he who cometh unto thee earnestly seeking his salvation, and who feareth God, dost thou neglect. By no means shouldst thou act thus.[1]

Mohammed afterwards showed the blind man great kindness and respect, and on two occasions made him Governor of Medina.[2]

The rights of women and children are not defined by Mohammedan law in such a way as to provide for all possible contingencies; the Koran rather enjoins obedience to general principles, which, if faithfully followed, are probably sufficient for most practical purposes.

The following passages from the Koran are adduced as further illustrations of its ethical character:—

Thou shalt admonish those who fear their Lord in secret, and are constant at prayer; and whoever cleanseth himself from the guilt of disobedience, cleanseth himself to the advantage of his own soul; for all shall be assembled before God at the last day. The blind and the seeing shall not be held equal; neither darkness and light; nor the cool shade and the scorching wind; neither shall the living and the dead be held equal.[3]......Thou art[4] no other than a preacher; verily we have sent thee with truth, a bearer of good tidings, and a denouncer of threats.[5]

Your wealth and your children are only a temptation; but with God is a great reward. Wherefore fear God, as much as ye are able; and hear, and obey; and give alms, for the good of your souls; for whoso is preserved from the covetousness of his own soul, they shall prosper. If ye lend unto God an acceptable loan, he will double the same unto you, and will forgive you; for God is grateful and long-suffering, knowing both what is hidden and what is divulged; the Mighty, the Wise.[1]

Woe be unto those who give short measure or weight; who, when they receive by measure from other men, take the full; but when they measure unto them, or weigh unto them, defraud! Do not these think they shall be raised again at the great day, the day whereon mankind shall stand before the Lord of all creatures?[2]

Ye honour not the orphan, neither do ye excite one another to feed the poor; and ye devour the inheritance of the weak, with undistinguishing greediness; and ye love riches with much affection. By no means should ye do thus.[3]

If a woman fear ill-usage or aversion from her husband, it shall be no crime in them if they agree the matter amicably between themselves, for a reconciliation is better than a separation. (Chap. iv.)

O true believers, observe justice when ye bear witness before God, although it be against yourselves, or your parents, or relations, whether the party be rich or whether he be poor, for God is more worthy than them both: therefore, follow not your own lust in bearing testimony so that ye swerve from justice. (*Ibid.*)

Invite men unto the way of thy Lord by wisdom and mild exhortation; and dispute with them in the most condescending manner: for thy Lord well knoweth him who strayeth from his path, and he well knoweth those who are rightly directed. If ye take vengeance on any, take a vengeance proportionable to the wrong which hath been done you; but if ye suffer wrong patiently, verily this will be better for the patient. (Chap. xvi.)

Thy Lord hath commanded that ye worship none besides him; and that ye show kindness unto your parents, whether the one of them or both of them attain to old age with thee. Wherefore say not unto them, Fie on you! neither reproach them, but speak respectfully unto them; and submit to behave humbly toward them, out of tender affection, and say, O Lord, have mercy on them both, as they nursed me when I was little. (Chap. xxvii.)

Whoso striveth to promote the true religion striveth for the advantage of his own soul, for God needeth not any of his creatures; and as to those who believe and work righteousness, we will expiate their evil deeds from them; and we will give them a reward according to the utmost merit of their actions. (Chap. xxix.)

Verily the true believers are brethren: wherefore reconcile your brethren; and fear God,

[1] Koran, c. lxxx.
[2] Sale's *Koran*, p. 437, note.
[3] These terms stand for the true believers and the infidels respectively.
[4] *I.e.*, Mohammed.
[5] Koran, c. xxxv.

[1] Koran, c. lxiv. [2] *Ibid*, c. lxxxiii. [3] *Ibid*, c. lxxxix.

that ye may obtain mercy. O true believers, let not men laugh other men to scorn, who peradventure may be better than themselves; neither let women laugh other women to scorn, who may possibly be better than themselves. Neither defame one another; nor call one another by opprobrious appellations. An ill name it is to be charged with wickedness, after having embraced the faith: and whoso repenteth not, they will be the unjust doers. O true believers, carefully avoid entertaining a suspicion of another: for some suspicions are a crime. Inquire not too curiously into other men's failings: neither let the one of you speak ill of another in his absence. (Chap. xlix.)

Serve God, and associate no creature with him; and show kindness unto parents, and relations, and orphans, and the poor, and your neighbour who is of kin to you, and also your neighbour who is a stranger, and to your familiar companion, and the traveller, and the captives whom your right hands shall possess. (Chap. xiv.)

God commandeth you to restore what ye are trusted with to the owners; and when ye judge between men, that ye judge according to equity; and surely an excellent virtue it is to which God exhorteth you. (*Ibid.*)

Observe justice when ye appear as witnesses before God, and let not hatred towards any induce you to do wrong; but act justly: this will approach nearer unto piety. (Chap. v.)

Strive to excel each other in good works. (*Ibid.*)

Evil and good shall not be equally esteemed of, though the abundance of evil pleaseth thee. (*Ibid.*)

The next ensuing verses are extracted from Rodwell's translation, in which the suras are arranged as nearly as possible in the order of their appearance:—

Adopt a placable method; and enjoin what is just, and withdraw from the ignorant. (Chap. vii.)

Fear God with all your might, and hear and obey; and expend in alms for your soul's weal, for whoso is saved from his own greed shall prosper. (Chap. lxiv.)

To those of your slaves who desire a deed of manumission, execute it for them if ye know good in them, and give them a portion of the wealth of God which he hath given you. (Chap. xxiv.)

Woe then to those who pray,
But in their prayer are careless,
Who make a show of devotion,
But refuse help to the needy.
(Chap. cvii.)

Your Lord well knoweth what is in your soul; he knoweth whether ye be righteous;
And verily gracious is he to those who return to him in obedience;
And to him who is of kin render his due, and also to the poor and to the wayfarer; yet waste not wastefully. (Chap. xvii.)
Touch not the substance of the orphan unless in an upright way till he attain his age of strength; and perform your covenant. Verily the covenant shall be inquired of;
And give full measure when you measure; and weigh with just balance: this will be better and fairest for settlement......And walk not proudly on the earth: truly thou canst by no means cleave the earth, neither canst thou reach to the mountains in height. (*Ibid.*)

Very prominent in the Koran is the idea that just conduct will receive an ample reward hereafter:—

As to him who believeth and doeth, he shall have a generous recompense. (Chap. xviii.)

No soul knoweth what joy of the eyes is reserved for the good in recompense of their works. (Chap. xxxii.)

On the other hand, the "unbelievers shall taste a terrible punishment," and be recompensed "according to the worst of their actions" (c. xli.), which is a little severe.

Wife and children are the adornment of this present life; but good works which are lasting are better in the sight of thy Lord as to recompense, and better as to hope. (Chap. xviii.)

The idea of personal responsibility is strictly preserved:—

He who doeth right it is for himself; and he that doeth evil it is for himself (c. xli.).

For his own good only shall the guided yield to guidance, and to his own loss only shall the erring err, and the heavy laden shall not be laden with another's load. (Chap. xvii.)

An extract from chap. iv. recalls Cromwell's advice to his Ironsides to "Pray to God, but keep your powder dry":—

When ye march to war in the earth, it shall be no harm in you if ye shorten your prayers, in case ye fear the infidels may attack you; for the infidels are your open enemy. But when thou, O prophet, shalt be among them, and shalt pray with them, let a party of them arise to prayer with thee, and let them take their arms; and when they shall have worshipped let them stand behind you, and let another party come that hath not prayed, and let them pray with thee, and let them be cautious and take their arms.

The 93rd sura, which follows in its entirety, is perhaps the most beautiful in the Koran:—

By the brightness of the morning; and by the

night when it groweth dark: thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, neither doth he hate thee. Verily, the life to come shall be better for thee than this present life: and thy Lord shall give thee a reward wherewith thou shalt be well pleased. Did he not find thee an orphan, and hath he not taken care of thee? And did he not find thee wandering in error, and hath he not guided thee into the truth? And did he not find thee needy, and hath he not enriched thee? Wherefore oppress not the orphan; neither repulse the beggar; but declare the goodness of thy Lord.[1]

The following passage also forms a complete chapter:—

By the war-horses which run swiftly to the battle, with a panting noise; and by those which strike fire, by dashing their hoofs against the stones; and by those which make a sudden incursion on the enemy early in the morning, and therein raise the dust, and therein pass through the midst of the hostile troops: verily man is ungrateful unto his Lord; and he is witness thereof: and he is immoderate in the love of worldly good. Doth he not know, therefore, when that which is in the grave shall be taken forth, and that which is in men's breasts shall be brought to light, that their Lord will, on that day, be fully informed concerning them.[2]

The last sura that we shall quote

[1] Koran, c. xciii. [2] *Ibid*, chap. c.

consists of only twenty-four English words, yet it is reckoned by Mohammedans themselves to be equal in value to a third part of the whole Koran. As it has no concern with practical ethics, that judgment will hardly be endorsed by the English reader:—

Say, God is one God; the eternal God: he begetteth not, neither is he begotten: and there is not any one like unto him.[1]

Generally, with regard to the ethical features of Islam, we may say that "injustice, falsehood, pride, revengefulness, calumny, mockery, avarice, prodigality, debauchery, mistrust, and suspicion are inveighed against as ungodly and wicked; while benevolence, liberality, modesty, forbearance, patience, and endurance, frugality, sincerity, straightforwardness, decency, love of peace and truth, and, above all, trusting in God and submitting to his will, are considered as the pillars of true piety and the principal signs of a true believer."[2]

[1] Koran, c. cxii.
[2] Chambers's *Encyclopædia*, art. "Mohammedanism."